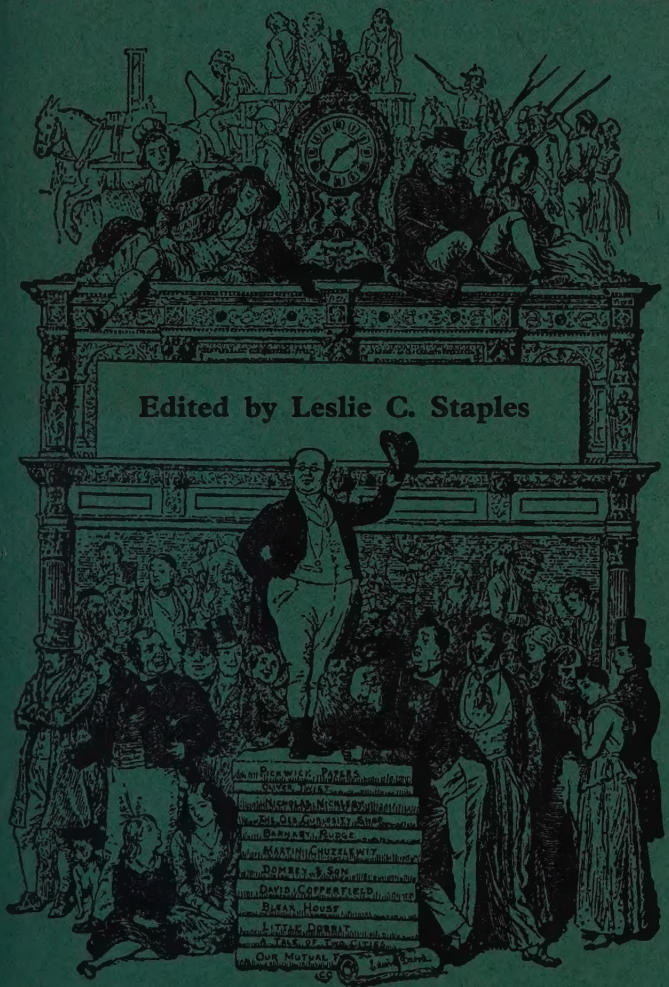
LII,
2

SPRING NUMBER
Published March, 1956

No. 318

THE DICKENSIAN



PUBLISHED BY THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP
THE DICKENS HOUSE, 48 DOUGHTY STREET,
LONDON, W.C.1.

Price TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE
Subscription rate : Ten Shillings and Sixpence, per annum. post free.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
When Found—, The Editor	51
Religious Movements in the Lifetime of Charles Dickens. The Dean of St. Paul's	52
The Idyllic in Dickens. Frank A. Gibson	59
Dickens in the Jury Box. W. J. Carlton	65
Dickens and a Story by John Poole. Kathleen Tillotson	69
The Ghost of a French *Hamlet*. Leslie C. Staples	71
Acton on Dickens. R. J. Schoeck	77
Recent Dickensiana	80
Plays and Sketches by Boz. Malcolm Morley	81
A Christmas Play; Television	88
Dickens Rejects. Gerald G. Grubb	89
For the Dickensian's Bookshelf. John Butt, Pansy Pakenham, The Editor	91
Letter to the Editor: *Edwin Drood*. Pansy Pakenham	96
The Dickens Fellowship	96

THE REVIEW OF ENGLISH STUDIES

A Quarterly Journal of historical and critical studies in English literature and the English language, founded in 1925. Each issue contains articles, short notes, reviews of recent books, and a summary of periodical literature. The Editor is supported by an advisory panel of twenty distinguished scholars.

A New Series commenced with the volume for 1950.

Published in January, April, July and October.

Subscription (for four consecutive numbers) 30*s.*, *post free*. Single numbers 8*s.* 6*d.* *net*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Amen House - London, E.C.4.

BROADSTAIRS ANNUAL DICKENS FESTIVAL

1956

JUNE, 20th to 23rd inclusive

Organised by the Broadstairs Branch of the Dickens Fellowship.

DICKENS PLAY - "PICKWICK PAPERS"

Adapted by GLADYS WATERER

From the novel by Charles Dickens.

Walking Tour of Old Broadstairs.

Dickensian Tea Party in the Garden of Bleak House.

Visit to Canterbury.

Other Attractions.

Further particulars of the Festival may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Broadstairs Branch, Dickens Fellowship, Dickens House, Broadstairs.

Please send a stamped addressed envelope.

The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens

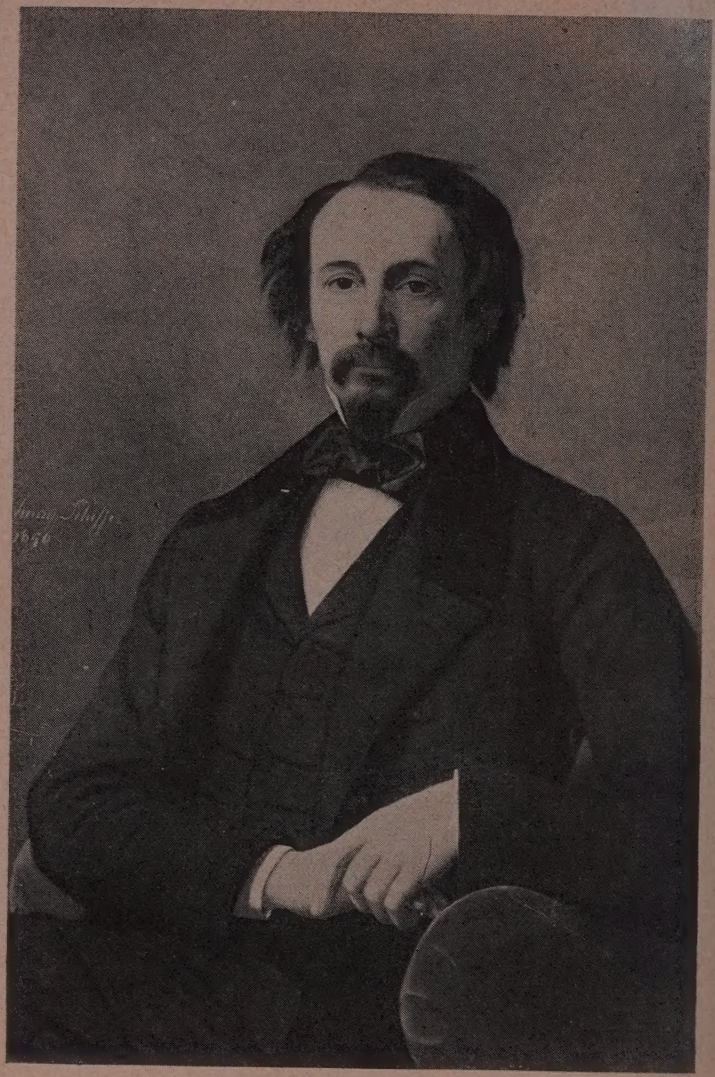
THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD

INTRODUCED BY S. C. ROBERTS

Cloth, 10*s*. 6*d*. *net* *Écrasé leather, gilt top*, 21*s*. *net*

This is the sixteenth volume and was added to the series on 23 February.
Dr. Roberts's Introduction discusses the story and draws particular attention to those characters who are notable additions to the unique Dickens gallery. In a supplementary note he considers the main theories advanced in the numerous attempts to determine Dickens's intentions for the solution of the mystery. The plates in the present new issue have been remade from the original edition.

Oxford University Press



CHARLES DICKENS, 1855

by

Henri Scheffer, 1798-1862

By the courtesy of Harvard University

(see opposite)

THE DICKENSIAN

SPRING NUMBER

VOL. LII. MARCH 1956 No. 318

WHEN FOUND—

Portrait by Henri Scheffer

Close upon the heels of the discovery, and gift to the Dickens House, of the long-lost Angus Fletcher bust of Dickens, as reported in our last number, comes news of another portrait of the novelist that was also lost sight of for many years, that by Henri Scheffer, which forms the frontispiece to this issue. It was painted in Paris in 1855, at the sittings given to Ary Scheffer for the well-known portrait now in the National Portrait Gallery in London. "Both brothers . . . peg away at me at the same time," wrote Dickens to Forster. Although Ary's picture was admired by many, it was not considered a very satisfactory likeness, and Henri's portrait Forster thought "in all ways greatly inferior." Kitton, in his *Charles Dickens by Pen and Pencil*, 1889, says that he made a long and fruitless search for the Henri Scheffer picture. Ley wrote erroneously in 1928 that it was then in France. It now hangs in the Dining Hall of the Harvard Union building, in Cambridge, Mass., and we are indebted to Mr. John Coolidge of the Fogg Art Museum for the opportunity of reproducing it. On the back of it there is a brief history of the picture, cut from a newspaper, which states that it was once the property of a Dr. Beggi in London, and afterwards in Florence. After his death it was purchased by a Florentine dealer who was unaware of the subject, and in his shop it was recognised by W. C. Spence. It was presented to Harvard University in 1915 by Francis L. Higginson, who had bought it from a friend in England. As far as we can discover, the attention of Dickensians has not hitherto been drawn to its presence there.

* * * * *

Mr. John Greaves

Congratulations to our Hon. Secretary, Mr. John Greaves, whose recent Dickens Recital in Birmingham was the 500th that he has given since 1945. A large proportion of these have been given to Fellowship audiences all over the country, and everyone who has heard him will agree that we could not have a better ambassador. We owe him a debt that can hardly be repaid.

* * * * *

Dickens House

Visitors to the Dickens House in 1955 numbered 5,400, the highest total in any year since the House was opened to the public in 1925.

* * * * *

50th Annual Conference

If you have not already made your plans to attend Conference at Eastbourne, May 25th-28th, write to Miss E. M. Mosley, 18 St. Philips Avenue, Eastbourne, for details.

LESLIE C. STAPLES

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN THE LIFETIME OF CHARLES DICKENS

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

delivered at Gray's Inn Hall, October 13th, 1955, by The Very Rev. W. R. MATTHEWS, Dean of St. Paul's.

CHARLES DICKENS was born in 1812 and died in 1870; that is to say he first saw the light when Napoleon I was nearing his fall and was nearly three years old when the Battle of Waterloo was fought. He died in the year of the Vatican Council and the fall of Napoleon III. The period covered by his life includes the prelude, the beginning and the core of the Victorian Age. What was the character of the Victorian Age? Dickens himself, in *A Tale of Two Cities*, has written a few memorable sentences about the various views of the eighteenth century and we might apply them equally well to the nineteenth century. Perhaps the only safe generalisation about it is that, like all other ages, it was one of transition. It carried on a heritage from the eighteenth century and it left a legacy to the twentieth. In it we may see the germs of most of what we now enjoy or endure. The Victorian Age is very close to us and its documentation is enormous, but in many respects it is strange to us. An excursion into the early nineteenth century is rather like going to America. The people seem to speak the same language, but they do not always mean the same thing. The religious aspect of this period is worth study and, in some respects, is more rewarding than the political, for the issues debated by politicians then are now largely dead and have been settled for good or ill. But in the religious sphere almost nothing is simply dead and done with. The problems debated then are with us still and the movements of religious thought are still alive, so much alive, in fact, that I shall be fortunate if I do not tread on someone's toes this evening. It must be admitted that Dickens is not an ideal peg on which to hang observations about religion in the first half of the nineteenth century. He was not an intellectual, nor was he given to abstract thought. Certainly he was a religious man, but he was not a theological man and his religion was of the heart rather than the head. Nevertheless, his mind was sensitive and alive to the hopes and aspirations of people around him and his writing must have been affected by the religious climate in which he lived.

The nineteenth century had a two-fold heritage from the eighteenth. Two distinct and largely antagonistic tendencies were carried forward. The eighteenth century has been described as "the age of reason"—and with justice. There was much confidence in the power of reason to guide mankind to peace and happiness and, in reaction to the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century, there was a distaste and even a fear for "enthusiasm." To describe a man as an "enthusiast" in the eighteenth century was to employ a term of abuse. But there was another and different movement, the Evangelical Revival associated with the names of John and Charles Wesley. This was a

wave of individual faith and conversion which certainly did not discourage enthusiasm, but kindled it in wide circles of the population. Both these influences persisted powerfully right through our period. It would be misleading to suppose that these two tendencies were simply religious and anti-religious. That would be a false simplification. There was a great deal of genuine religion in the eighteenth century which was, itself, rational in character. The famous dialogue between John Wesley and Bishop Butler in which the great Christian philosopher remarked that he regarded the claim to have a special revelation of the Holy Spirit as a very horrid thing is significant, for it brings together two convinced Christians whose religion was different in type.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Evangelical religion was a powerful force and, in the opinion of Halévy, this was the principal cause why there was no revolution in England similar to that in France. Before Dickens was born it had had a great triumph in social reform by the abolition of the slave trade, followed in 1833 by the abolition of slavery. These two triumphs were almost entirely due to Evangelicals like Wilberforce, and later the great Lord Shaftesbury's successful efforts to mitigate some of the appalling results of the industrial revolution were inspired by Evangelical faith and supported by Evangelicals. Evangelism was not a Nonconformist movement in its origin, nor was it a revival of Puritanism, but it was largely a native original version of the New Testament message. It began within the Anglican Church, of which both John and Charles Wesley were priests, and the Weslyan movement did not set out with the intention of becoming a sect. In fact, Evangelical religion entered into all the older Christian communions, making converts in all and finding also opponents. When it was most influential in the country it still had important and outspoken opponents, e.g., Sydney Smith with his contempt for " sanctified cobblers." The important point to notice is the profound effect which Evangelical religion had upon the moral and spiritual temper of the people. It emphasised the salvation of the individual through conversion followed by sanctification. It held that the Bible was the inspired word of God without any qualification. It laid little emphasis upon the Church and still less upon the authority of tradition. G. M. Young, in his *Portrait of an Age*, rightly remarks that Evangelism gave this island a creed which was the basis of its morality and also of its sense of being an elect people. The " respectability ", which became so marked a feature of the Victorian code, was a kind of hardened residue of the faith which had produced so remarkable an effect upon the nation. We may observe that the moral climate produced by Evangelicalism had a consequence for Dickens and his fellow-novelists of the period. A large part of human life, notably that connected with sex, could only be hinted at. In this respect Dickens differed both from the eighteenth century novelists, Fielding and Smollett, and from those of the present day. One can but admire the genius of Dickens which enabled him, while keeping within the taboos, to touch so vividly on so many aspects of humanity. I do not think, however, it would be unjust to say that he did not particularly admire the

dominant Evangelicalism of his day. No doubt Stiggins and Chadband are not intended to be portraits of a whole class of people, but they certainly do not suggest an attitude of sympathy to the tradition which they misrepresent. On the other hand, in Mr. and Mrs. Milvey, we have a slight but sympathetic portrait of the parish clergyman who appears to be an Evangelical. Dickens certainly had a dislike of the Sabbatarianism which went along with the Evangelical tradition. His descriptions of the English Sunday are depressing and he consistently supported the National Sunday League in his own day.

We turn now to the other heritage—rationalism. It is often said that the Victorians were concerned with the conflict between science and religion. This is true of the later period, but in the earlier part of the century the conflict was more general between some form of rationalism and faith. Throughout, the Victorian Age was one of tension. The Utilitarians were the most influential representatives of the rationalist tendency and had an important influence on morals and political action. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) is the founder of this school. He was an amiable old gentleman who was very much concerned with the reform of legislation and legal procedure and appears to have been entirely without interest in religion. His view of morality has been described as " Paley without hell fire." Let me explain this. Archdeacon Paley, the author of the *Evidences of Christianity*, had defined virtue as " doing good according to the will of God for the sake of everlasting happiness." Bentham dropped out " the will of God " and identified good with happiness. He then went on to identify happiness with pleasure. Bentham was by no means, however, an advocate of pure selfishness. He regarded the proper aim of legislation and the test of all institutions as " the greatest good of the greatest number." " Everyone," in making this reckoning is, he added, " to count for one and no one for more than one." This formula he applied as the criterion of every law or institution or custom. It will be easily deduced that Bentham had no reverence at all for tradition. Indeed, one of the great services of Utilitarianism was its attack on traditional ways of thought and action which had become obsolete. To these maxims, Bentham added another one, " Every man is the best judge of his own interests." From these fundamental principles arose the doctrine described as *laissez-faire*. Everyone is to count for one; everyone is to be the judge of his own interests; thus it follows that all restraints upon the individual's pursuit of his own happiness are, in principle, wrong. It was this conviction which led the Radicals of the early part of the nineteenth century to oppose all factory legislation. John Stuart Mill is the finest representative of Utilitarianism and his *Political Economy*, published in 1847, one of its most important literary monuments. Mill modified the theory by admitting that pleasures differed not only in quantity, but in quality and that it was in some way better to be a not particularly happy man than a perfectly happy cow. This was clearly an improvement on Bentham's view, in that it was more in accordance with the actual facts of the case. But, unfortunately, it introduced a contradiction into the theory, because, if one

pleasure is intrinsically more valuable than another, the amount of pleasure cannot be the criterion of good.

It is difficult to say exactly what Dickens's reaction to the Utilitarianism was—probably he never consciously formulated his opinions. In *Hard Times*, however, we have what seems to be an attack on some of the consequences of *laissez-faire*, both in the misery which it produced and its deplorable results on the character of those who acted upon its principles. Certainly, Dickens was revolted by oppression whenever he found it. But I am inclined to think that he never grappled with the question of the meaning of liberty and probably, if challenged, would have given much the same answer as Bentham. Someone, I think, has said that Dickens was the kind of person who cursed society for inflicting wrong on individuals and equally cursed society when it attempted to restrain the freedom of those who inflicted the wrong.

The Victorian Age succeeded a period of exceptional isolation from Europe, and the effects of this isolation continued for some time. The French Revolution and the wars which followed interrupted the free communication of ideas between Britain and the Continent and, in consequence, our culture became insular in a degree which sharply distinguishes it from the eighteenth century, when English culture was a distinctive part of European. A result of this was that even the most learned theologians in the early part of the nineteenth century were largely ignorant of German philosophy and historical studies and, in the rare cases in which they were aware of them, as was Dr. Pusey, they heartily disliked them.

Individualism is a strong note of the period which we are reviewing. Both the prevailing religious outlook, Evangelicalism, and the prevailing philosophy, Utilitarianism, were in their different ways, individualist, the one concentrating on the salvation of the individual soul and the other on the right of each individual to pursue his own interests. These two individualisms came to a notable conflict over the Factory Acts in which Shaftesbury, the Evangelical individualist, was opposed by Bright, the representative of *laissez-faire*.

In 1833 some have seen the high-water mark of Evangelical influence. It was the year, you will remember, in which the first of the *Sketches by Boz* appeared and also the year after the first Reform Bill. It is, however, most notable as the beginning of the Oxford Movement. We cannot here attempt to re-tell the story of its rise or estimate its significance, but it would be absurd to speak of the Victorian Age from the religious standpoint without giving considerable space to it. The occasion of its coming into the public eye seems to us a trivial one; the suppression of some Irish bishoprics which, I suppose we should all agree now, was a highly desirable thing having regard to the condition of Ireland at that time. The causes, however, lie much deeper. It did not set out to be a counterblast to Evangelicalism, but to Liberalism, and conceived itself not as opposing Evangelicalism but rather as completing it by supplying its deficiencies, and it is a significant fact that all the leaders of the Movement had an Evangelical background.

The fact that the Oxford Movement, which was in many respects so much out of harmony with the spirit of the times, nevertheless made considerable progress calls for comment. Among the reasons for its success we must, I think, put the Romantic movement in literature and particularly the influence of Scott's novels and Coleridge's poetry, which gave rise to a certain idealisation of the Middle Ages. More important, perhaps, was the excessive individualism of the prevailing religious and philosophical doctrines. It was really inevitable that there should be some reaction against this, partly because individualism by itself is unsatisfactory, both from a logical and from a human point of view. The conception of the Church as a supernatural society is, after all, actually to be found in the New Testament and has been an essential part of historical Christianity. The Oxford Movement, in drawing attention to these facts, was redressing a balance. At this time many minds were vaguely distressed by the conflict of opinion and were ready to accept the teaching of the Church as the authority on which they might rest their faith. To these causes, we must add that, in John Henry Newman, the Movement possessed one of the greatest writers of English prose and one of the most fascinating personalities in our literature.

It is difficult for us to understand the violence of the conflict which gathered round the Oxford Movement and the attempts to suppress it by violence. I have met old people who have described to me the riots which took place—some of them in the East End of London. I am told that the worst of these riots was caused by the singing of the Litany which was regarded as a dangerous popish innovation! My informant was of opinion that scarcely anyone in the groups which wrecked the church could have repeated any part of the Litany and doubtless, to a large extent, these disturbances were simply the expression of the restlessness and aggressive feelings of the untutored mob.

In 1845 Newman became a Roman Catholic and this was an important event in the religious history of these times. It did not, however, shatter the Oxford Movement, as many expected, but we may note that from this date the Roman Catholic Church made considerable progress. In 1850 the Pope reconstituted the Roman Catholic hierarchy by setting up dioceses, a move which called out violent anti-papal reactions, and issued in the Ecclesiastical Titles Act (1851) which was completely ineffectual and repealed not long afterwards. The Oxford Movement originally showed little interest in social reform. From a political point of view, it was not only conservative, but even reactionary and its early leaders were bitterly opposed to measures which, looking back upon, everybody now would regard as desirable. As the Movement developed, however, it drew the social implications of its central doctrine, that of the Incarnation, and, as we know, later generations who were inheritors of the tradition of the Oxford Movement produced many doughty, self-sacrificing fighters for social justice.

This brings us to a group of Christians and Churchmen who were deeply concerned with social justice—the so-called Christian Socialists, the chief representatives of whom are Frederick Denison

Maurice and Charles Kingsley. The years 1839-1848 were full of agitation, one of the symptoms of which was the rise of Chartism and the demands of the Chartists for a more democratic constitution and fair play for the poor. The Christian Socialists were convinced that the answer to Chartism was not to be found simply in repression, but rather in the application of Christian principles to the life of the nation. Frederick Denison Maurice, who founded the first women's college and the Working Men's College, was one of the great men of the Victorian Age and we may note that, as time goes on, his importance seems to be more widely recognised. In the past few years, four important books at least have been written about him. Frederick Denison Maurice was a theological thinker as well as a Christian socialist. In a general sense he could be called a Liberal, but fundamentally he was an orthodox Christian, having thought himself out of Unitarianism into the Anglican Church. He was, however, dismissed from his post as Professor of Theology in King's College, London, in 1853 on the ground that his teaching on eternal punishment was likely to mislead the minds of the young men who came to his lectures. I had the honour at one time to occupy one of the Chairs from which Maurice was evicted and I remember with pleasure that I had some part in founding a Maurice Lectureship in King's College, London, as a somewhat belated reparation for the wrong which was done him.

As we approach the end of our period, we observe that doubts and perplexities about the central doctrine of Christianity become more widespread and probe more deeply. It is sometimes imagined that the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 began this period of unsettlement, but this is an exaggeration. Certainly Darwin's great work caused a considerable stir and many Christians were startled and perturbed by it. But the idea of evolution was in the air and the mood of questioning had already received its classical expression in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. There is something symbolical in the fact that this poem was published at the very middle of the nineteenth century, in 1850. If there is any one voice which speaks the dominant mood of the thoughtful in this period, it is that of Tennyson, who expresses a faith maintaining itself in the midst of doubts and questions to which it can find no answer. The importance of Darwin's book is not that he formulated the theory of evolution, but that he formulated a theory of how evolution was effected, i.e., by natural selection.

The year following the publication of *The Origin of Species*, *Essays and Reviews* appeared, which was a collection of essays written by Anglicans who were acquainted with the tendencies of modern science and of recent Biblical scholarship and were sure that their fellow churchmen should attempt to come to some conclusion on their relation to the Christian faith. This was the first of a fairly long series of similar collections of essays which, from time to time, have attempted to stimulate Christian thinking. On this occasion, the Church, on the whole, was not grateful to those who urged it to think. Fifty per cent. of the clergy signed a declaration which condemned *Essays and Reviews* and asserted an unswerving belief in eternal punishment.

Let us conclude this imperfect survey of a very complex period by looking at the situation in England in the year of Dickens's death, 1870. We must not dwell upon the change in outward conditions which had taken place since 1812—the railways, the steam power in factories, joint stock companies, the growth of the influence of the press. These we must take for granted. We are concerned with the intellectual and religious outlook. In 1870 the voices of scepticism and of questioning were growing in strength. In that year Matthew Arnold published his important work, *St. Paul and Protestanism*, soon to be followed by *Literature and Dogma*. Algernon Charles Swinburne had begun to sing his *Songs before Sunrise*, with their frankly pagan inspiration. W. S. Gilbert, who was certainly not a theologian, but was to contribute a good deal to the outlook of his generation and later generations, had published his *Bab Ballads* in 1869. The works of German and French scholars with a critical or sometimes definitely sceptical tendency were beginning to be widely known. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, which appeared in 1835, was translated into English by George Elliot, and its thesis that the Gospel life of Jesus was largely mythical had a serious impact upon the educated public. In 1863, Rénan's *Vie de Jésus* quite soon became known in England and in 1865 Seeley's *Ecce Homo* caused an astonishing amount of disturbance in the minds of pious people. Seeley's aim was very far from being sceptical, but his presentation of the human life of Jesus shocked not a few. Amid this babel of voices, there sounded, just at this time, a beautiful voice from the previous generation, Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. And, on the other hand, Thomas Henry Huxley invented the word " agnosticism " to describe his own state of mind and that of many others.

The peace of the Victorian Age, such as it had been, was breaking up, but religion in practice was vigorous and creative. As the period proceeded, missionary enterprises grew in strength and width of activity. The age of questioning, strangely enough, was the age in which Christianity expanded throughout the world as never before. It was, moreover, one of the ages when the Christian religion could point to more martyrs perhaps than at any previous time. The churches in this country were better cared for and worship grew more real and more dignified. In St. Paul's Cathedral, for example, the deplorable conditions to which Kingsley had drawn attention were reformed and in the very year in which Dickens died Canon Liddon began his great series of sermons which filled St. Paul's on Sunday afternoons. Nor were the Nonconformist churches behind in renewing their vigour. Charles Haddon Spurgeon began his ministry in the Metropolitan Tabernacle in 1861 and, at the same time, R. W. Dale was at Carr's Lane, Birmingham, and Thomas Binney in King's Weigh House Chapel, London. All these men were great and widely influential preachers of the Gospel. Probably this was the time when preaching counted for more in the life of the country than ever before.

Dickens's life began with the fall of Napoleon I and ended with the fall of Napoleon III. There was to follow, in the future, the rise of Prussia and the new alignment of power in Europe. At the moment of his death we might say the first stage began in the

journey to the age of violence in which we have lived. Soon was to come the technical revolution which was based on science and later the problems of the atomic age. In the last years of Dickens's life, Karl Marx was writing *Das Kapital* in the British Museum. In the religious sphere a new kind of philosophy was making its appearance which had a greater sympathy and understanding of religion and was taking the place of the narrow Rationalism of the past. English scholars, Westcott, Lightfoot, Hort and others were preparing their studies of the New Testament and primitive Christianity. History was moving on and the England which Dickens knew and described so vividly was being transformed by degrees into the England that we know, but the roots of the present age were in the Victorian period and we may understand our own times a little better if we reflect upon those which immediately preceded them. Charles Dickens is of course a writer who transcends his own age, as all men of genius do, but he is also one of the great Victorians and in his pages the Victorian Age in many of its aspects comes alive for our delight and instruction.

THE IDYLLIC IN DICKENS

By Frank A. Gibson

I

WHAT exactly do we mean by idyllic? The original meaning of "idyll" was a little picture or image, not necessarily of pastoral theme. By no means all of the idylls of the ancient pastoral poet were of pastoral character. Charm rather than rusticity would seem to be the essence, and it is merely in the nature of things if we more often find charm in rustic scenes and people. We prefer to linger over the widow Rudge's little cottage rather than over the more sophisticated Wemmick's castle.

There is an element of escape, too, in the idyll. A story which has always seemed strangely idyllic is Stevenson's *Kidnapped*—and that is an escape from beginning to end. Another though less well known work of purely idyllic character is the Provençal book of Félix Gras translated under the title *The Reds of the Midi*; and in this we see vividly a poor little peasant boy marching with the famous Marseillais, seeing the revolution through his boyish eyes and escaping all its corruption. A third, rather better-known work, Israel Zangwill's *The King of Schnorrers*, depicts the simple scene of the Jewish beggar's ingenious escape from poverty in spite of all the efforts of his co-religionists to outwit him. Even this last seems to fit the term "idyllic."

In Dickens, Nicholas and Smike escape from the Yorkshire school; Oliver Twist escapes from the workhouse and the thieves' den; David Copperfield escapes from the Murdstones; Martin Chuzzlewit from the Pecksniffs, little Nell and the grandfather from Quilp—and so on. As whole works, possibly only three of the Dickens books, *David Copperfield*, *Barnaby Rudge* and *The Old Curiosity Shop* may be regarded as altogether idyllic, though there are strong idyllic elements in *Nicholas Nickleby*. In the three books, the author rides no moral hobby-horse. There is a

very small hobby-horse in *Nicholas*. Of the others it might perhaps be said that they are nearer epic quality; *Our Mutual Friend*, for instance, is an epic of the Thames. A test of the minor idyll—of the " little picture "—is whether it lingers in the mind when we have forgotten most of the rest. One such surviving scene is when Nicholas and Smike stand for a few moments on the edge of The Devil's Punch Bowl.

> They walked upon the rim of The Devil's Punch Bowl, and Smike listened with greedy interest as Nicholas read the inscription upon the stone which, reared upon that wild spot, tells of a murder committed there by night. The grass in which they stood had once been dyed with gore; and the blood of the murdered man had run down, drop by drop, into the hollow which gives the place its name.

This passage has not been overlooked by the compilers of Baedeker's *Great Britain*. Nicholas and Smike are inseparably connected with The Devil's Punch Bowl, on the Portsmouth Road.

There is at least one idyllic moment in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver's little room, in which he was accustomed to sit when busy with his books at the Maylie's:

> . . . was on the ground floor, at the back of the house. It was quite a cottage room, with a lattice-window; around which were clusters of jessamine and honeysuckle, that crept over the casement and filled the place with their delicious perfume.

Oliver dozes happily, for the day had been uncommonly sultry. Suddenly, in his sleep, he imagines he hears the Jew's voice and sees his face, and, opening his eyes, sees in fact that dark and dreaded countenance at the window . . .

Cruikshank's etching of this scene gives quite happily the bright light of the fine summer evening. We share Oliver's fear less than his enjoyment of that drowsy summer day. The reason is that his fear is transient; the glorious summer day is eternal.

The idyll, too, must be simple in theme; all complications are banished with the wicked world. What could be simpler than the progress of Nicholas and Smike from London to Portsmouth for the purpose of becoming mariners if no other employment were to be obtained ? Hence we admire their momentary study at the Punch Bowl of the erring world on which they have turned their backs, and with its sylvan background it lingers in memory.

The restfulness of the idyll is moral rather than physical. There was little physical rest for David Balfour, for the boy Pascal, for the hard-working parasite, Manasseh da Costa. But what a wealth of moral and mental ease ! Nicholas and Smike's venture was no picnic. They did the thirty and odd miles to Godalming on the first day and hoped to manage the balance to Portsmouth on the morrow, a pedestrian feat reflecting Dickens's own famous walking powers. It is reassuring to remember that Barkis on another occasion thought his horse would be " deader than pork " before he got over half the ground from Blunderstone to London.

There is an idyllic touch—not at all pastoral—in the end of Ralph Nickleby. All that terrible story of his castaway son weighs with the burden of many and wicked years upon the ruined man.

so heartbreakingly long ago ! And how long ago, exactly ? Just fourteen years—which at the present time is one year less than the period since world war II began. And Ralph Nickleby's years were normal. On the whole we tend to regard him as a lucky fellow, living in comparatively idyllic times, and we attribute his end to acute dyspepsia. Otherwise he could have made a new and cleaner start in the next fourteen years—possibly with an insurance agent's book. But that vast period of fourteen years is a reminder of the youth of the author; it was half a lifetime to him at 27.

The final illustration to *Nicholas Nickleby* is pure idyll—the children playing round the grave of their dead cousin. But this, we must admit, owes as much to Phiz as to Dickens. The scene would have been distinctly less charming, be it noted, if the church tower in the background had been that of, say, " Saint Ghastly Grim " or St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe. (And how grimy the poor children would have got !)

The " little picture " abounds in Dickens. One of the less well remembered is in chapter 19 of *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Nell is trying to earn a little money by selling flowers at the races:

> There was but one lady who seemed to understand the child, and she was one who sat alone in a handsome carriage, while two young men in dashing clothes, who had just dismounted from it, talked and laughed loudly at a little distance, appearing to forget her, quite. There were many ladies all around, but they turned their backs, or looked another way, or at the two young men (not unfavourably at *them*), and left her to herself. She motioned away a gipsy-woman urgent to tell her fortune, saying that it was told already and had been for some years, but called the child towards her, and taking her flowers put money into her trembling hand, and bade her go home and keep at home for God's sake.

Here we have the " little picture " complete with moral. The moral is not solely that of the bad girl in the carriage but rather the more recondite one of the " bad woman " who is the only good woman.

Very incidentally, only a few words after this passage there is an instance of a queer and little-commented upon change in the English language since Dickens's day. We read that " the bell *rung* " (rang) " to clear the course." There must be very many other instances of the kind—almost the only ones in Dickens—which, correct in his time, would be regarded now as solecisms. In the preceding chapter 16, for instance, there is " when you've *drank* . . ." (drunk). In chapter 17, Little Nell " sprung " (sprang) from her bed. In *Barnaby Rudge*, chapter 10, Hugh " sprung " into the saddle at a bound. Scott's famous lines about the caitiff, unwept, unhonoured and *unsung*, would have had to be recast if, " doubly dying ", that undeserving case had gone down to the vile depths from whence he *sprang*.

II

It is fitting that *Master Humphrey's Clock* should be, of all Dickens's works, the richest in idyll. The original form of the book, in three volumes, handsomely bound and printed in imperial

octavo, gives it a unique aspect. The binding is particularly attractive, with blind tooling back and front, a maroon cloth handsomely gilt on the spine, and with, on the front cover, a gilt representation of " The Clock," the single hour-hand pointing to I, II and III for respectively the first, second and third volumes. The printed page is 1¼ inches longer and over ¾ inch wider than the pages of the monthly numbers of later works, and it has a wide margin. The type is larger and more readable. Curiously enough, the least idyllic parts are those which the author may have hoped would strike an idyllic note—the re-introduction of the two Wellers and Mr. Pickwick; they are, as Chesterton pointed out, too comfortable to be as amusing as in their earlier and more strenuous days. The Giant Chronicles will no doubt repay perusal —what is there of Dickens that does not ?—but we are glad to get away from the Clock Case, from Mr. Weller's Watch and old Humphrey's " venerable suburb " (Dulwich is meant) and the old house—" in bygone days a famous resort for merry roysterers and peerless ladies, long since departed "—and join Master Humphrey in his roamings, nocturnal and matutinal. It is, however, only fair to recall that Master Humphrey was in fact the anonymous " single gentleman," little Nell's great-uncle, the only begetter of the true tale of *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

Here, then, are our escapees, our idyllists fleeing from Quilp and Quilpism:

> It was the beginning of a day in June; the deep blue sky unsullied by a cloud and teeming with brilliant light. The streets were as yet nearly free from passengers, the houses and shops were closed, and the healthful air of morning fell like breath from angels on the sleeping town.
>
> The old man and the child passed on through the glad silence, elate with hope and pleasure . . .

Pretty good for homeless wanderers !

When, after a time, they continued their journey:

> The road was pleasant, lying between beautiful pastures and fields of corn, above which, poised high in the clear blue sky, the lark trilled out her happy song. The air came laden with the fragrance it caught upon its way, and the bees, upborne upon its scented breath, hummed forth their drowsy satisfaction as they floated by.

It is interesting to compare this early " little picture " with that last idyllic moment when Dickens wrote as almost his last words in the unfinished novel:

> A brilliant morning shines upon the old city. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods and fields—or, rather from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time—penetrate into the cathedral, subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life.

But, to return to the two wanderers, what Theocritean idyll could surpass the description of an occasional village ?:

> They were now in the open country; the houses were very few and scattered at long intervals, often miles apart. Occasionally they came upon a cluster of poor cottages, some with a

chair or low board put across the open door to keep the scrambling children from the road, others shut up close while all the family were working in the fields. These were often the commencement of a little village: and after an interval came a wheelwright's shed or perhaps a blacksmith's forge; then a thriving farm with sleepy cows lying about the yard, and horses peering over the low wall and scampering away when harnessed horses passed upon the road, as though in triumph at their freedom. There were dull pigs too, turning up the ground in search of dainty food, and grunting their monotonous grumblings as they prowled about, or crossed each other in their quest; plump pigeons skimming round the roof or strutting on the eaves; and ducks and geese, far more graceful in their own conceit, waddling awkwardly about the edges of the pond or sailing glibly on its surface. The farm-yard passed, then came the little inn; the humbler beer-shop; and the village tradesman's; then the lawyer's and the parson's at whose dread names the beer-shop trembled; the church then peeped out modestly from a clump of trees; then there were a few more cottages; then the cage, and pound, and not unfrequently, on a bank by the wayside, a deep old dusty well. Then came the trim-hedged fields on either hand, and the open road again.

All of which, less possibly the cages and pounds, may still be seen by a passer-by as observant as Dickens.

Barnaby Rudge is also almost pure idyll, besides being equally or more picturesque. The old "Maypole" had "more gable ends than a lazy man would care to count on a sunny day" and looked as if it were "nodding in its sleep." But the old house is entirely realistic and convincing. It is partially derelict, the stables are ruinous, birds are nesting in the chimneys of unoccupied rooms. Later on, Mr. Haredale throws a vivid light on its past when, addressing Mr. Chester in the Maypole's "state room" he declines to be seated and says, impatiently, "I will stand on this dismantled, beggared hearth, and not pollute it, fallen as it is, with mockeries." He felt very bitter about it. Was it a former Catholic mansion? It is typical of the Dickens sense of reality that Mr. Haredale seems to know; Dickens does not; he only writes that it was an old house, "perhaps as old as it claimed to be and perhaps older."

The Vardens, mother and daughter, are of course a precious study, and there are undoubtedly signs, as George Gissing feared, that the lovely Dolly was destined to tread in at least some of the maternal paths. When, in passing the library door she was accosted by Mr. Haredale and asked if she were the bearer of a letter to Edward Chester, she hesitated, and, "not being able to decide upon any other course of action, burst into tears." Just what her mother would have done.

One might perhaps doubt the admirable qualities of the Maypole bar, which struck even Mrs. Varden dumb with admiration; for there was no landlady and only stupid old John in charge. But was he so stupid? I venture to doubt it. His remarks about the moon showed exceptional wisdom. There is still a hardy fiction in the countryside that the moon governs the weather. The moon,

a model of regularity, is presumed to influence the frantic English seasons, the versatility of which might have served as a pattern for Mrs. Varden's temperament. Willet gave the sound advice:

> Never you mind about the moon. Don't you trouble yourself about her. You let the moon alone, and I'll let you alone.

Reasonable enough, in all conscience!

But it is the charm of the English lanes and the forest of Epping which appeals to us and lingers in our memory of this idyllic Dickens novel. H. G. Wells tells us that he explored the Forest one bleak March in order to dispose of a theory that there was no Forest at all in the winter, and that it was in fact taken up and put away and agriculture pursued there. He survived to rejoin "anxious friends," to boast euphemistically of a pleasant day, and to urge them to go even as he had gone.

Our introduction to the old Maypole is similarly neither on a summer nor an autumn evening but in:

> the twilight of a day in March, when the wind howled dismally among the bare branches of the trees, and rumbling in the wide chimneys and driving the rain against the windows of the Maypole inn, gave such of its frequenters as chanced to be there at the moment an undeniable reason for prolonging their stay, and caused the landlord to prophesy that the night would certainly clear at eleven o'clock precisely—which by a remarkable coincidence was the hour at which he always closed his house.

But the scenes of *Barnaby Rudge*, in town or country, winter or summer will continue to interest by their subtly idyllic quality. In his next novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens put on his moralising cap, and the pure idyllic vein was, at any rate for a time, abandoned.

But not altogether. Even in *Chuzzlewit* we are at once in the "little Wiltshire village, within an easy journey of the fair old town of Salisbury." A wind is raised for Mr. Pecksniff—ominous of his end, when he was unable to raise the wind on his own account. The autumnal scene is charming. Which brings us to the point at first abandoned, that the countryside, or, if you will, escape to the country, is essential to the idyll. Wells's *The Wheels of Chance* and Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* are nothing if not idyllic. Most, if not all, of Thomas Hardy's work has that quality. No doubt we are all at heart country people, the roots of our past are in the country, and pastoral themes stir "chords in the human mind" à la Guppy. Dickens, to whom crowds and cities were at times imperative, returned ever and again to the country, and in the last, unfinished novel, which Longfellow praised as "certainly one of his most beautiful works", he pictured the countryside of his boyhood and recalled the yearly wonder of its "yielding time".

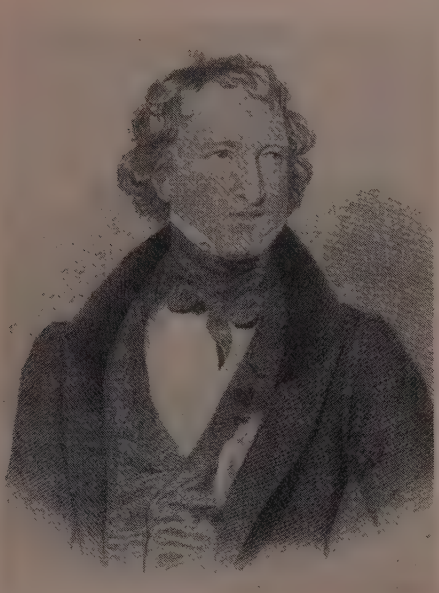
We had almost forgotten *Pickwick*—one long idyll of the early nineteenth century—full of country scenes and sunshine. Not less brilliant than that final morning in the old city of *Edwin Drood*, is the scene when Mr. Pickwick leans upon the balustrade of Rochester Bridge, "contemplating nature and waiting for breakfast".

And of course one must not forget the charming Christmas tale told by the Boots at the Holly Tree Inn.

DICKENS IN THE JURY BOX

By William J. Carlton

TOWARDS the close of 1839 Charles Dickens, having acquired a respectable bank balance as well as an international reputation, quitted the modest dwelling in Doughty Street where he had lived for two and a half years to take up residence with his wife and three children in "a house of great promise" at 1 Devonshire Terrace, York Gate, Regent's Park, in the Borough of Marylebone. He had not been there many weeks when he received a summons to serve on a coroner's jury.



Thomas Wakley

Dickens's own account of this experience is to be found in a paper, "Some Recollections of Mortality," originally published in *All the Year Round* (May 16th, 1863) and reprinted in the second series of *The Uncommercial Traveller*, 1868. "Having newly taken the lease of a house in a certain distinguished metropolitan parish," he wrote, "——a house which then appeared to me to be a frightfully first-class Family Mansion, involving awful responsibilities—I became the prey of a Beadle." There follows a playful description of the way in which the new occupant of the family mansion supposed the Beadle to have become aware of his status as a householder, of his repairing for advice to another householder, who informed him that the beadle probably counted on being bought off or bribed not to summon him, and of the Beadle's discomfiture when he decided to attend the inquest with a cheerful countenance. "I roused my energies, and the next time the wily Beadle summoned me, I went. The Beadle was the blankest Beadle I have ever looked on when I answered to my name . . .

"We were impanelled to inquire concerning the death of a very little mite of a child. It was the old miserable story. Whether the mother had committed the minor offence of concealing the birth, or whether she had committed the major offence of killing the child, was the question on which we were wanted. We must commit her on one of the two issues."

The inquest which the novelist attended was held on January 14th, 1840, at the Marylebone Workhouse, on the body of the newly-born offspring of Eliza Burgess, a young woman of 24 or 25. It was conducted by Thomas Wakley, M.P. for Finsbury, the recently appointed Coroner of West Middlesex.[1] He had practised surgery in London since 1818, was a recognised authority on medical matters, and is remembered chiefly as the founder of *The Lancet* in 1823. It appeared from the evidence that the unfortunate mother had been for some eighteen months a housemaid in the service of Mrs. Mary Symmons at 65 Edgware Road. Latterly Mrs. Symmons's suspicions had been aroused by the young woman's appearance, and on the previous Sunday week, seeing that she looked very ill and thin, she taxed her with having given birth to a child. The girl at first denied it, but on being threatened with a medical examination confessed that she had hidden the body under the dresser, where it was found. A coach was sent for and both mother and infant were conveyed to the infirmary of the workhouse, where they had remained ever since.

The house surgeon, Mr. Boyd, stated that the mother had told him that on the Sunday in question she was suddenly seized with labour in the kitchen, when the bell was rung by two ladies. She hastened to let them in, in the act of doing so the child was born, and on her return it was dead. He could not say positively whether the child was born alive or not.

" The Inquest came off in the parish workhouse," wrote the Uncommercial Traveller (alias Charles Dickens), " and I have yet a lively impression that I was unanimously received by my brother Jurymen as a brother of the utmost conceivable insignificance. Also, that before we began, a broker who had lately cheated me fearfully in the matter of a pair of card-tables, was for the utmost rigour of the law." Dickens remembered that they had sat in a sort of boardroom, on such very large horse-hair chairs that he wondered what race of Patagonians they were made for; and that just after they had been sworn an undertaker gave him his card as " an inhabitant that was newly come into the parish, and was likely to have a young family." The case having been stated to them by the coroner, the jury went downstairs to view the body, led by the Beadle.

In a kind of crypt devoted to the warehousing of the parochial coffins, and in the midst of " a perfect panorama of coffins of all sizes," it was stretched on the box into which the mother had put it. " From that day to this the poor little figure has lain in the same place and with the same surroundings, to my thinking," wrote Dickens. " It had been opened, and neatly sewn up, and regarded from that point of view it looked as if the cloth were ' laid,' and the Giant were coming to dinner. There was nothing

[1] Five years before this Dickens, who had observed the Member for Finsbury on the floor of the House of Commons from his place in the reporters' gallery, made passing reference to him in "A Parliamentary Sketch " (*Dickensian*, L, 104, June 1954, p. 104). There is another allusion to him in a whimsical letter from Dickens to T. J. Thompson, written in February 1840; and in the first of a series of articles on the " Tooting baby farm," contributed to the *Examiner* on January 20th, 1849, the novelist paid a tribute to Wakley's conduct of an inquest on the bodies of some pauper children whose deaths were due to criminal neglect, a verdict of manslaughter being returned against Peter Drouet, the " farmer." " Mr. Wakley holds inquests," wrote Dickens, " and even manifests a disposition to institute a very searching inquiry into the causes of these horrors, rather thinking that such grievous effects must have some rather grievous causes." (" The Paradise at Tooting," *Miscellaneous Papers*.)

repellent about the poor piece of innocence, and it demanded a mere form of looking at." So the jurymen looked at an old pauper who was going about among the coffins with a foot rule, "as if he were a case of Self-Measurement"; and they looked at one another; and they said the place was well whitewashed anyhow; and then their conversational powers as a British Jury flagged, and the foreman said, "All right, gentlemen? Back again, Mr. Beadle!"

When the twelve jurors resumed their horse-hair chairs the young mother was brought before them and was present during the proceedings. "She had a horse-hair chair herself, being very weak and ill; and I remember how she turned to the unsympathetic nurse who attended her, and who might have been the figure-head of a pauper-ship, and how she hid her face and sobs and tears upon that wooden shoulder. I remember, too, how hard her mistress was upon her (she was a servant-of-all-work), and with what a cruel pertinacity that piece of Virtue spun her thread of evidence double, by intertwisting it with the sternest thread of construction. Smitten hard by the terrible low wail from the utterly friendless orphan girl, which never ceased during the whole inquiry, I took heart to ask this witness a question or two, which hopefully admitted of an answer that might give a favourable turn to the case. She made the turn as little favourable as it could be, but it did some good, and the Coroner, who was nobly patient and humane (he was the late Mr. Wakley,[1]), cast a look of strong encouragement in my direction."

The next witness was the doctor who had examined the body and made the usual tests as to whether the child had been born alive. "But he was a timid muddle-headed doctor, and got confused and contradictory, and wouldn't say this, and couldn't answer for that, and the immaculate broker was too much for him, and our side slid back again.

"However, I tried again," continued Dickens, "and the Coroner backed me again, for which I ever afterwards felt grateful to him as I do now to his memory; and we got another favourable turn, out of some other witness, some member of the family with a strong prepossession against the sinner; and I think we had the doctor back again; and I know that the Coroner summed up for our side, and that I and my British brothers turned round to discuss our verdict, and get ourselves into great difficulties with our large chairs and the broker. At that stage of the case I tried hard again, being convinced that I had cause for it; and at last we found for the minor offence of only concealing the birth; and the poor desolate creature, who had been taken out during our deliberation, being brought in again to be told of the verdict, then dropped on her knees before us, with protestations that we were right—protestations among the most affecting that I have ever heard in my life—and was carried away insensible."

The actual verdict, as reported in *The Times* of January 15th, 1840, was "Found dead."

Dickens recalled that in private conversation with the Coroner afterwards, Wakley gave his reasons as a trained surgeon for

[1] Thomas Wakley died at Madeira, May 16th, 1862.

perceiving it to be impossible that the child could, under the most favourable circumstances, have drawn many breaths, in the very doubtful case of its having ever breathed at all, owing to the discovery of some foreign matter in the windpipe, quite irreconcilable with many moments of life.

"When the agonised girl had made these final protestations," continued the Uncommercial Traveller, "I had seen her face, and it was in unison with her distracted heartbroken voice, and it was very moving. It certainly did not impress me by any beauty that it had, and if I ever see it again in another world I shall only know it by the help of some new sense or intelligence. But it came to me in my sleep that night, and I selfishly dismissed it in the most efficient way I could think of. I caused some extra care to be taken of her in the prison, and counsel to be retained for her defence when she was tried at the Old Bailey; and her sentence was lenient, and her history and conduct proved that it was right. In doing the little I did for her, I remember to have had the kind help of some gentle-hearted functionary to whom I addressed myself—but what functionary I have long since forgotten—who I suppose was officially present at the Inquest."

Citing this incident as an illustration of the practical turn of Dickens's kindness and humanity, Forster quotes from a letter received the next morning from the novelist: "Whether it was the poor baby, or its mother, or the coffin, or my fellow-jurymen, or what not, I can't say; but last night I had a most violent attack of sickness and indigestion which not only prevented me from sleeping, but even from lying down. Accordingly, Kate and I sat up through the dreary watches."[1]

Dickens's estimate of Thomas Wakley as a coroner was quoted by the latter's biographer with the comment: "Wakley himself would have desired no other critic, and having earned Dickens's praise would have considered that no higher eulogy could possibly be bestowed upon him. And indeed, that the man to whom officials of all sorts were hateful, from Mr. Bumble to Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle, from the worshipful Mr. Nupkins to Mr. Justice Stareleigh, should praise the official in Wakley, and that the most powerful friend the poor and suffering have ever known should praise the patience and humanity in him, constitute a tribute to his memory transcending in force and conviction any words from other lips. Dickens as a judge of practical politics or polite manners might not be considered in the place most fitted for him; exception might be taken to his opinions. But Dickens as a judge of how the official should behave to the poor, and of how a popular court should be conducted, is ideally situated; and the man whom he has commended in such relations need not fear the judgment of posterity."[2]

The fidelity of Dickens's narrative to the facts of the case may be gauged from the report of the subsequent proceedings in the Central Criminal Court. On March 9th, 1840, Eliza Burgess was indicted "for unlawfully concealing the birth of a male child of which she was delivered in the parish of Marylebone on the

[1] J. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. J. W. T. Ley (1928), p. 158.
[2] S. Squire Sprigge, *Life and Times of Thomas Wakley*, 1897, p. 427.

5th of January last." Richard Doane, the counsel retained by Dickens for the prisoner's defence, was a barrister of the Inner Temple practising at the Westminster, London and Old Bailey sessions, with an office at 2 New Inn Buildings. He addressed the jury after the evidence of the girl's mistress and of a surgeon who had been called to examine the child soon after it was found. He was sure, he said, that the jury would take a merciful view of the case when he informed them that the unfortunate young woman at the bar was of weak intellect, and had been imposed upon by some heartless fellow who took advantage of the state of the law to effect her ruin, knowing that the consequences would not be visited on himself. He was instructed to state that Mr. Clarkson, a respectable tradesman in Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, in whose family the prisoner had previously lived, had exerted himself to get her into the Magdalen Asylum, where she might be removed with the consent of the Court.

The jury found the prisoner guilty of the concealment, but strongly recommended her to mercy. Mr. Clarkson was then called and stated that, at the express wish of his wife, who felt great interest in the fate of the young woman, he had gone to the Magdalen Asylum and hoped to procure her admission there. In the meantime he was willing to take her back into his service.

Mr. Serjeant Arabin said that under these circumstances he would respite judgment on the prisoner until next session, and in the meantime she might be liberated (*Times*, March 10th, 1840).

" I regard this," concluded The Uncommercial Traveller, " as a very notable uncommercial experience, because this good came of a Beadle. And to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, it is the only good that ever did come of a Beadle since the first Beadle put on his cocked-hat."

DICKENS AND A STORY BY JOHN POOLE

By Kathleen Tillotson

IT is known that when Dickens collected his first published story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," in the Second Series of *Sketches by Boz*, he introduced various changes. The original version was published in facsimile in *The Dickensian* (December 1933), and also in F. J. Harvey Darton's *Dickens, Positively the First Appearance* (1933), where a few comments are made on these revisions. Besides altering the title to " Mr. Minns and his Cousin," Dickens changed the cousin's surname from " Bagshaw " to " Budden "; this Mr. Darton calls " a small alteration for some unknown and mysterious whimsy."

There is only one parallel in the *Sketches* to such change in a name; " Mr. Harfield " of " Mrs. Joseph Porter " becomes " Mr. Harleigh." There the reason is not far to seek; it is evidently a joke with John Pritt Harley, the comic actor with whom Dickens was closely associated at the time of revision, during the production of *The Village Coquettes*. In default of other evidence, it

might be assumed that there was some similar personal reason for the Bagshaw-Budden change.

But other evidence does exist, and supplies an unmistakable answer. In the *New Monthly Magazine* for October 1829 appeared a story by John Poole (better known as a dramatist and author of *Paul Pry*) called " Preparations for Pleasure; or, the Pic-nic "; and the hero's name is Claudius Bagshaw. Dickens's " Octavius Bagshaw " surely represents an unconscious recollection of this; presumably, when Poole republished his story in the collected *Sketches and Recollections* in 1835, Dickens noticed the reminiscence, and made the change to avoid any suspicion of plagiarism.

* * * * *

The two tales were not otherwise much alike. Claudius Bagshaw lives at Lake-of-Lausanne Lodge, a house at the back of Euston Square; Octavius Bagshaw at Amelia Cottage, Poplar Walk, Stamford Hill. Claudius has expectations from his Uncle John, Octavius has hopes of assistance in his son's education from his cousin Mr. Minns; both are frustrated by the events of the story, the one concerning a river picnic, the other a dinner-party in which everything goes wrong. But Poole's story in other ways resembles another early tale of Dickens's —" The Steam Excursion," published in the *Monthly Magazine* of October 1834. The personnel of the two river-parties is similar, both including a young law student, a young lady who brings her guitar, a " funny man " given to practical jokes, and an univited child or children; there is a concert on board; and the return journey is ruined by a storm of wind and rain. There is no question of direct imitation; Dickens, as in so many of his early tales, decorates his farcical basis with a much more gay and subtle kind of humour—as in the Pickwickian proceedings of the committee arranging the excursion. But the resemblances, combined with Dickens's deliberate change of the name of Bagshaw, put his knowledge of Poole's story beyond doubt; and if further evidence be needed, it is found in the borrowing in *Pickwick* of the unusual name of another character—Snodgrass.

I would go further, and suggest that Dickens's early stories as a whole are more like Poole's than any of his other predecessors; it is a literary relation that would reward further investigation. (Hitherto it appears to have been unexplored, save for the obvious relation of Little Pedlington's theatre to Crummles in *Nicholas Nickleby*.) Perhaps Dickens's tender memories of an early admiration for Poole's stories played some part in the charitable and friendly assistance he gave to the old man in his long and poverty-stricken decline; so that there was something fitting in Poole's gesture of gratitude in 1862, when he presented to Dickens his " own private copy " (annotated) of the second edition of *Sketches and Recollections*.[1]

[1] *Catalogue of the Library of Charles Dickens* . . . ed. J. H. Stonehouse (1935), p. 95.

Corrigendum. Sincere apologies to Mr. St. John Ervine for the unfortunate misspelling of his name in our December issue. Our Index has been warned. EDITOR.

THE GHOST OF A FRENCH *HAMLET*

By Leslie C. Staples

AMONG my most cherished mementos of Charles Dickens is a dossier of papers, the last gift to me from that great Dickensian, the late Count de Suzannet. It concerns a pretty quarrel between Charles Fechter and Samuel Phelps, both friends of the novelist.

Walking into a theatre in Paris one evening, Dickens, it is said, saw Fechter for the first time and was enormously impressed by the undoubted genius of this great romantic actor, and for some years they were inseparable, to the mystification of Dickens's friends, for, privately, the actor revealed much that was regrettable. Even Kate Fields, who wrote an enthusiastic memoir of him, admits this. Dickens was largely instrumental in bringing him to London, although possibly he would have got here in any case, owing to the at least temporary inability of Napoleon III to get amended in his favour a law which restricted to members of the Comédie Française the acting of French classic plays. He appeared at the Princess's Theatre in 1860, and early in the following year essayed *Hamlet* with resounding success. "Perhaps," wrote Dickens, "no innovation in art was ever accepted with so much favor by so many intellectual persons, precommitted to and preoccupied by another system, as Mr. Fechter's *Hamlet*." His relations with the management of the Princess's Theatre were not altogether happy, and ultimately he opened in management himself, at the Lyceum, in 1863. It was with the results of one of his efforts to ensure complete success there, that my dossier is concerned.

In 1863, Samuel Phelps had recently concluded his memorable management at Sadler's Wells Theatre where, during nearly twenty years, he had produced thirty-four of the plays of Shakespeare, as well as many other Elizabethan and later plays. The productions were of a high order and met with universal praise. Dickens was a regular attendant, and after some hesitation sent Phelps a letter of warm congratulation, and made his acquaintance. After this they met frequently, though they never became close friends.

The stage is now set for the little story I have to tell, from a lawyer's copies of letters in the case, and two copies of letters of Dickens, in his own hand, to Phelps, all contained in my dossier.

The first letter, undated, is addressed by Fechter to Phelps as follows:

18 Marlborough Place, St. Johns Wood,
N.W.

My Dear Phelps

I hear that you mean to give up the management of the Sadler's Wells, if it be true are you open to business and would you entertain the proposal of *settle* and long run with me. I know and love you—I hope *you* know and *will love me* and nothing on earth could give me greater happiness than to follow my artistic faith arm in arm with you—Barnett will call upon you but drop me kindly a line upon the subject—whatever becomes

of this idea and of my warm wishes hold me dear Phelps for a sincere friend and admirer of yours

Ch Fechter

Barnett, who was acting manager to Fechter, called upon Phelps and offered him £30 a week for the proposed engagement. But Phelps made several objections, to which Fechter made the following, still undated, reply:

18 Marlborough Place, St. Johns Wood,
N.W.

My Dear Phelps

By your conversation with Barnett I see that you had not

Charles Fechter
Dickens House Collection

yet received my *second* note when he went up to you! All I can say is it shall be **your** house *as much as mine*. As for terms I am obliged to *look sharp out* but do not think I measure your talent to the sum I can afford to give you. This said *and from the heart* **do** come and make me happy. Yours ever

Ch Fechter

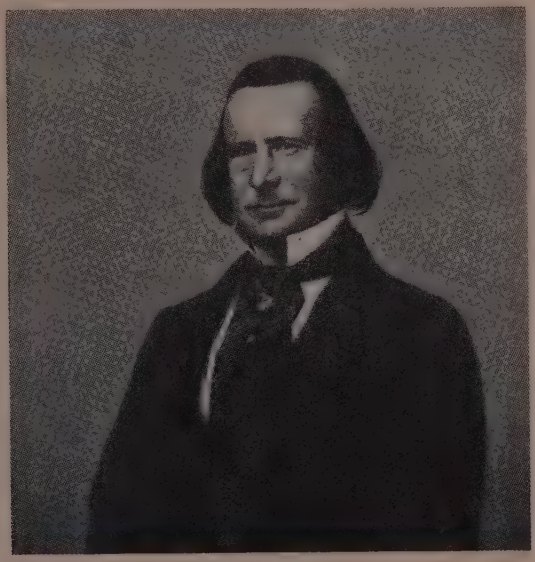
And apparently later:

76 Rue Chabot,
Paris

My very dear Phelps

I am obliged to bother you even from *over here*. My business in Paris is not and cannot be as quickly done as I expected & as I don't want to keep you waiting nor to be in the clouds

myself I come anew to settle our *Marriage* at the Lyceum—Is your mind made up yet ! as for the salary I know quite well that it is far from those you can get starring through the country and do not I repeat offer it as the price of your talent but as the measure of what I *can* give besides it runs through the whole season and as many seasons as you'll like to stay with me so that can't be a very bad situation. At all events I want to settle here for different plays to be written for us and cannot conclude without your agreement. I should like too to come and act here in Paris and would not undertake it without a good company & your solid help - You see dear friend that much now depends on your answer and I expect it with great



Samuel Phelps
Dickens House Collection

impatience I must confess. Love me as I love you and let two honest creatures walk at last through life *hand* in *hand* as wishes to do

Yours really devoted
Ch Fechter

When Fechter returned from Paris another meeting between him, Phelps, and Barnett took place. At the conclusion of this, Phelps asked for another day's deliberation and on the morrow wrote:

8 Canonbury Square
25th July

My Dear Barnett

A money haggle is hell to me—Creswick has just been here &

I have had a letter this morning dragging me another way. I cannot trust myself with Fechter again and therefore write. Is it possible with him to make my Salary £40 per week placing of course my whole time at his disposal.

Faithfully Yours
S. Phelps

Whereupon Barnett took Fechter's instructions to make the engagement, which he did, verbally, and Phelps agreed to play anywhere Fechter might send him. Barnett reported to Fechter as follows:

My Dear Fechter

I have seen Phelps. He is yours body and soul. He says he is ready to be yours to do anything he can from this date. He is a good old stager as a manager & good for you to talk to I asked him what sort of engagement he would like to sign, Anything you like, said he, "If Fechter is satisfied with my word, I am satisfied with his," was his answer. But if I may suggest I would have a letter like the enclosed

Yours ever
W. Barnett

He leaves town with Gurney on Tuesday. I would write at once, get his letter and that will be done with. I do not think you could have done a wiser thing. I was afraid to advise it in my note. But I would have done it to a certainty. He was joyous when I told him about Walter Montgomery

Acting upon this Fechter wrote to Phelps:

18 Marlborough Place, St. Johns Wood

I feel happy my dear Phelps to please you by my doings & as you state yourself a word between us is stronger than any signature. I therefore send you this simple word in a line to have things thoroughly settled and understood

"I engage you from the 1st January '63 for one year to act at the Lyceum under my management (or anywhere else as agreed) at the weekly Salary of Forty Pounds"

Is that it ! ! ! I am going back to Paris now I *have* you and try to settle there for what I told you. I would then require your services from the beginning of October Will that suit you too

Yours evermore
Ch Fechter

On January 10th, 1863, the Lyceum opened its doors under the management of Fechter, with *The Duke's Motto*, in which neither Phelps, or Walter Montgomery, or Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, whose services he had also secured by contract, were to be found playing. Instantly successful the play was withdrawn seven months later while still in the full flood of its success.

Phelps was asked to speak an ode on the occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Wales, but at his own urgent request was excused. Finding himself idle, he undertook a dramatic reading at the

Crystal Palace and trouble began. It was alleged that he had proceeded without Fechter's consent, and Phelps replied that he had referred the matter to Barnett, who, in turn, denied it. Later, Fechter obtained an offer of £60 a week for Phelps's services at the Standard Theatre, Shoreditch, for a period extending to Whitsuntide, with an option of extension. This arrangement Phelps declined to carry out, alleging that Fechter had himself broken their agreement by stopping his salary for Ash Wednesday, and Passion Week, and proposed that Dickens should arbitrate between them.

"In the meantime," continues the solicitor's narrative, "Mr. Barnett was directed by Mr. Fechter to ask Mr. Phelps what part he would play in *Hamlet*. He replied, '*Hamlet*. Do you think I'll play the Ghost to a blasted Frenchman?' This was not reported to Mr. Fechter until after the meeting before Mr. Dickens (which was on May 16th) had taken place. At that meeting Phelps declared Barnett had told him it was agreed that he was to play elsewhere than at the Lyceum with Mr. Fechter only, tho' in the meantime he declined to play 2nd parts to him—he said he wanted to play *Othello*. The meeting resulted in the letters being left with Dickens. Mr. Dickens said that most likely each party *believed* himself right and that he would recommend Mr. Fechter to waive his claim to send Mr. Phelps elsewhere, which he did. At this arbitration or discussion Mr. Phelps made it a point that Barnett should not be present or referred to, to which Mr. Fechter at the time assented."

Immediately after this meeting Phelps applied to the Lyceum treasury for his salary, saying that all was settled. That evening Barnett reported Phelps's words in declining to play the ghost in *Hamlet*. Fechter thereupon returned to Dickens who despatched the following letter:

26 Wellington St Strand W.C.
Thursday 21st May 1863

My Dear Mr. Phelps

A new difficulty has arisen in the way of a good understanding between yourself and Fechter which Fechter has been here to-day to communicate to me—I am exceedingly sorry to be made aware of it but it is so irreconcileable with the spirit Fechter Shewed when your difference was referred to me here & with the spirit in which you expressed yourself towards him in reply that I feel I cannot dismiss it however disagreeable the topic.

Mr. Barnett has informed Fechter that you in so many words told him (Barnett) that you would not play the ghost in *Hamlet* "to a Blasted Frenchman." Now assuming these words to have been actually used they are both personally and nationally so exceedingly discourteous and offensive that I cannot wonder at Fechter's being much at a loss to know how to preserve amicable relations with a member of his company who uttered them—will you be so good as to give me some enlightenment on this head

Faithfully yours
Charles Dickens

In response to this letter, Phelps called upon Dickens, admitted having used the offensive words to Barnett and freely expressed his regret at having done so. This Dickens reported to Fechter who desired Dickens to send the following letter:

26 Wellington Street, Strand, W.C.
Friday Night 22nd May 1863

My Dear Mr. Phelps

Fechter has come to me to-night after the closing of his theatre and I have reported to him exactly what passed between you and me to-day. He refuses to recognise your engagement any longer on the ground that it is impossible to preserve either business relations or friendly relations with you.

Faithfully yours
Charles Dickens

Phelps then placed himself in the hands of his solicitors and there follow copies of letters to and from, claiming salary on the part of Phelps and insistence by Fechter that the contract was concluded. An action by Phelps was to have been heard in the Court of Common Pleas on December 5th, 1863, but in fact was not. My papers do not reveal how the dispute was finally settled. After the seven month run of *The Duke's Motto*, Fechter re-opened the Lyceum in October with *Bel Demonio* which enjoyed another lengthy run.

Fechter staged his Lyceum revival of *Hamlet* in the following year, on May 21st, 1864, although as already stated, he had played it at the Princess's before going into management himself. *The Times* gave the second revival an interesting notice, but made no comment on the Ghost. The Ophelia was Kate Terry, the elder sister of Ellen. Kate was an actress much admired of Dickens. The Gravedigger was Henry Widdicomb, who in 1855 was playing in *The Seven Poor Travellers* (see *The Dickensian*, 1955, p. 128) at the Surrey, where he was then resident comedian.

This second revival had been designed for April 23rd of that year, which was the tercentenary of the birth of the poet, but the delay was occasioned by Fechter's protracted absence resulting from a stage accident.

The authors of the biography of Phelps, W. May Phelps and John Forbes Robertson, state categorically that Fechter engaged Phelps, Walter Montgomery and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Mathews, and deliberately neglected to use their services, in order to ensure that they might not compete with his Lyceum venture. As soon as Phelps's name was removed from the bills he had several offers, and accepted one from Drury Lane, where he played leading parts for seven years with great success. In his first year, in October, he had a most notable success in Byron's *Manfred*. Supporting him was Walter Montgomery, but how he too escaped from Fechter's employ I cannot say.

Fechter remained at the Lyceum until 1867. An account of Dickens's co-operation with him there, and afterwards, is given by Mr. Malcolm Morley on page 88.

ACTON ON DICKENS

By R. J. Schoeck

TO our portrait, still deepening in colour and perspective, of Charles Dickens as he was seen by his contemporaries, must surely be added the comments and criticisms of the most learned man of his century, Lord Acton. If objection be offered that Acton was no competent judge on literary matters, that he was only a mere historian, it must be declared that Acton was one of the most perceptive observers of intellectual currents of the nineteenth century as he was perhaps the most acute historian of ideas in modern times. Among the Acton papers at Cambridge, an Acton scholar has recently written,[1] "there are, for example, interesting references to Kierkegaard, whom Acton must have been one of the earliest Englishmen to notice, just as he was one of the first to realise the importance of Marx." I have elsewhere endeavoured to discourse upon Lord Acton as a student and critic of literature, and in several places to bring together and comment upon his evaluation of other nineteenth century novelists, poets and essayists; here I may perhaps refer to Fasnacht's generalisation that "Acton's philosophy was based on a mastery of many disciplines as well as of many periods—economics, ethics, politics, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, sociology. As Lord Morley said, Acton was extraordinary both in the depth and compass of his mind. His knowledge was matched by a character which has been described as heroic."[2] As the list of disciplines offered above is not complete (few would deny Acton's competence in the history of theology, *e.g.*, though he would surely be the last to claim infallibility for himself), the generalisation is by no means complete in suggesting the depth and quality of his intellect. While Acton declared himself interested in the practical aspects of literature more than in the aesthetic, in ideas rather than in style, he was by no means blind or deaf to style in literature, and his preference seems to have swung back towards style in his later years. And we must, I think, distinguish those comments which are directed to the professional historian and addressed to special problems of historical research from the more general considerations of the man of letters (and here the letters to Mary Gladstone are especially important in giving us the fuller sweep of Acton's interests). One is struck immediately by the development in Acton's judgment of Dickens, and it must surely be accounted one of the triumphs of Dickens that he so successfully won over the learned Lord Acton.

The quotations from Acton's writings on Dickens range from 1858, when he was 24, to 1883, when he was nearly 50. I have not had access to the notes and manuscripts in the Acton library at Cambridge University, and have worked only from the printed collections of Figgis-Laurence, Gasquet, Lally, Woodruff, Himmelfarb and Fasnacht; but I think for present purposes the selections are sufficiently widely chosen to be representative and descriptive.

[1] G. E. Fasnacht, *Acton's Political Philosophy* (1952), p. 11 *n.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

II.

[From a letter to Richard Simpson, December 8th, 1861.[1]]

. . . If you cook Dickens, do it with your own sauce, not with mine. In spite of your dislike of novels, you must have read his older works. Our recent novel literature seems to me to be our greatest glory in literature since Bulwer's reformation. They are nearly all respectable except Currer Bell and Kingsley—but at least the masters, Neo-Bulwer, Thackeray, Dickens, Reade, Trollope. The corrupt Bulwer was in the ascendant, then Boz appeared, which is much to the credit of the latter. Certain Germans of the last century remind me of him as to religion. They saw "no divine part of Christianity", but divinified humanity, or humanised religion, and taught that man was perfectible, but childhood perfect. So they used to die full of benevolence and admiration of the sun and moon, and for their children and their dog and for their home. They hated intolerance, exclusiveness, positive religion, and with a comprehensive charity embraced all mankind and condemned alike differences of faith and distinctions of rank, as insurrection against the broad, common humanity. Their religion was a sort of natural religion adorned with poetry and enthusiasm —quite above Christianity. Herder was a man of this stamp. Surely Dickens is very like them. Nothing can be more indefinite than his religion, or more human. He loves his neighbour for his neighbour's sake, and knows nothing of sin when it is not crime. Of course this shuts out half of psychology from his sight and partly explains that he has so few characters and so many caricatures. His humour, I take it, is only the second cause of his caricaturing, and has found its grave in it. I really cannot see the fun of describing a man by an absurdity, by his always sucking his forefinger, or having a mouth like a letterbox, or firing a gun at sundown. It is mere poverty of imagination. His habit of taking a particular newspaper or other incidents and personages into his books is a sign of the same failing. A poet describes something more general than a particular character. Is it more than mere Protestantism that all his deaths should be without spiritual assistance? . . .

We can quickly pass over Acton's sketch of the early nineteenth century novel: if some emphases make eyebrows lift, the view as a whole is surely not unsound. As Bishop Mathew comments: "It was now six years since Charlotte Brontë, who had used the pseudonym Currer Bell, had died, Charles Kingsley had published *Westward Ho !* in 1855: it is not difficult to see how that book and *Jane Eyre* would rile John Acton. He was always hostile to any emotional heightening of a situation. Bulwer Lytton's appeal is more difficult to fathom."[2]

III.

Elsewhere in his correspondence with Simpson there is one other treatment of Dickens. The first, written in January, 1864,

[1] Printed in Gasquet, *Lord Acton and His Circle* (1906), pp. 241-2—reprinted in part by Mathew, in *Acton, The Formative Years* (1946), p. 129.
[2] *Acton*, p. 129.

is concerned primarily with Thackeray and his novels, but proceeds to a comparison of Dickens with Thackeray:

> . . . There are historians, like Thiers and Ranke, whose cleverness won't allow them to recognise the union of greatness and genius with goodness. Their great men are Richelieu, Frederick, Napoleon, without high moral virtue; and their good men are commonplace or else dupes. They require some compensation of this kind, and would be puzzled to draw the conventional Washington or Burke. There is a point to be made here for those who read and love the lives of the saints; and, as you will remember Thackeray's joke about the dictionary, perhaps he would deserve it. For he is very like those historians. I suppose more poetry would have raised him above this defect, for Dickens is without it, although he is so far below Thackeray in his characters.
>
> The resemblance to Horace which one of the reviews suggested, may deserve following out. Is it not a fault in art to hold the mask in one's hand instead of on the face, to be constantly looking out from behind it? To give him his place in literature, you must read *Tom Jones* and Thackeray's essay on Fielding. Is he not quite incapable of the great effort of art which is so common in Shakespeare, and which Dickens imitates, of putting the comic perpetually as a foil to the tragic? He rather relieves the comic by the colloquial . . . [1]

And, more briefly, an earlier comparing of Dickens with Carlyle (writing in the *Rambler*, in December, 1858, on Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*[2]):

> It is a history made up of eccentricities. This is the way that Mr. Dickens writes novels; for whom the spectacle of an elderly gentleman, a pair of mulberry-coloured hose, or a wandering American pig have greater attractions than any psychological problem. . . .

Again Acton is seizing upon the same aspect that concerned him in 1861, when he wrote of Dickens's fondness for "describing a man by an absurdity".

IV.

The weighty passages on Dickens in the Simpson letters must be balanced by the more at ease, less self-conscious Acton we see in the letters to Mary Gladstone:[3]

> . . . It is beginning at the wrong end to read *David Copperfield* first, but he is worth anything to busy men, because his fun is so hearty and so easy, and he rouses the emotions by such direct and simple methods. I am ashamed to think how much more often I return to Dickens than to George Eliot.[4]

[1] Gasquet, *op. cit.*, 310-12.

[2] In a review of Carlyle's history, *The Rambler*, new series, vol. x, part 60 (December, 1858), p. 429—this extract quoted in D. Woodruff, *Essays on Church and State* (1952), p. 467, where it is dated Dec. 1868 in error.

[3] Acton once wrote her: "Please do not destroy the ease and serenity and confidence of my letters, which are chatted and whispered, more than written, by wanting to show them—even to Morley, in whom I have great reliance . . ." *Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone* (1904), p. 41.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 34 (September, 1880).

This, it must be observed, is the Acton of middle age. A year later, in 1881 (speaking of her father, the Prime Minister):

> You cannot too much cultivate his taste for Dickens. Beware of *Little Dorrit, Oliver Twist,* and *Dombey.*

[No doubt Acton is still hostile to emotional heightening.]

> In *Chuzzlewit* the English scenes are often amusing but there is a story about Pecksniff that may repel him.[1]

Finally, one of interest to those concerned with George Eliot and Dickens:

> Cross has shown me, with some secrecy, a very curious letter of Dickens, declaring that only a woman could have written the "Scenes from Clerical Life." But he gives no good reason, and I am persuaded that he had heard the secret from Herbert Spencer, who at once detected it. I dare not express my doubt . . .[2]

Writing in 1883, Acton apparently had no knowledge of the exchanges between Eliot and Dickens, who had suspected her sex as early as 1858.[3]

V.

If we must conclude that this selection of Acton's writings on Dickens reveals more of the defects than the virtues of Acton's considerations of literature, we must also recognise that Acton has caught the essential critical issue—as Lord David Cecil put it in *Early Victorian Novelists,* "Dickens often fails over his characters . . . even in his memorable figures he shows sometimes an uncertain grasp of psychological essentials . . ." Giving credit to Dickens's "essential quality of the artist, creative imagination", Acton has levied judgment on his frequent failings over his characters; and he has seen Dickens against his contemporaries with sharpness of vision and understanding.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 41 (October, 1880).
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 163 (March, 1883).
[3] Cf. Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens* (1952), II, 955-6.

RECENT DICKENSIANA

"Dickens and His Lawyers," Franklin E. Vaughan. *American Bar Association Journal,* July 1955.

"Dickensian Diagnoses," Sir Russell Brain. *British Medical Journal,* December 24th.

"Twelfth Night" (fiction), Michael Harrison. *London Mystery Magazine,* December.

"Dickens and the Brick-and-Mortar Sects," Arthur A. Adrian. *Nineteenth Century Fiction,* December.

"Dickens and the Iron Road," H. Chase. *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society,* January.

"Emily Fotheringay and Ellen Ternan," Morchard Bishop. *Times Literary Supplement,* January 27th.

PLAYS AND SKETCHES BY BOZ

By Malcolm Morley

IN a letter to Mrs. Howitt, dated September 7th, 1859, the adult Dickens wrote to her of the child Dickens:

> "I was a great writer at eight years old or so—was an actor and a speaker from a baby."

Self-expression enveloped the infant at a time when he could barely have assimilated the letters of the alphabet. A creative urge within him was seeking the stage: both player and playwright were there in embryo. He could have devoted his life to either occupation, his talent, his genius, were at the service of the Muses. The fate that willed him to be a novelist gave to his art a more enduring medium and the world has gained thereby. The player struts his hour and is gone; the playwright has, perforce, to mould his imagination, curb his fancies, to the mode and fashions of the theatre. Later in life, Dickens, as a Public Reader of his own works, found on the platform a return to his earliest love, impersonating or displaying characters of his own creation before a living and responsive audience. But by that time Dickens was the supreme English novelist.

The reference in the letter to Mrs. Howitt was to *Misnar, the Sultan of India*, a play written by the child Charles and one in which he surely must have taken a part, acting it before a nursery public. The eight-year-old author found his material in *Tales of the Genii*, a book in the house where he lived at Chatham—one probably read to him by his parents. No copy of that play, if one ever existed, has been preserved. Without doubt, it must have been his first completed effort at writing.

As a school boy at Wellington House Academy, Charles took part in performances of *Cherry and Fair Star* and in the glorious old melodrama *The Miller and his Men*. These performances, it has been assumed, were showings in a Toy Theatre with cardboard characters and cardboard scenery: but they might well have been living theatricals. There seems nothing definitely against such a conjecture. *The Miller and his Men* calls for a spectacular explosion at the grand climax when the mill, together with the robbers masquerading as millers, is blown sky high. Here was something of a challenge to the inventive resources of the Stage Manager, Master Dickens.

The juvenile dramatist may have authored other plays following *Misnar*. If so, they have disappeared save for *The Stratagems of Rowena* written when he was sixteen. The manuscript was discovered in Paris by G. E. Milne at a comparatively recent date—1926. Described as a Venetian comedietta by C. J. H. Dickens, the work consists of 131 pages in the handwriting of his mother. Van Amerongen in his book *The Actor in Dickens* says:

> "The plot, which strongly bears the mark of immaturity, and suggests in nothing the hand of the master of humour, is concerned with the loves and adventures of a number of cosmopolitan characters gathered together at an Inn in Venice. The description of the place, however, closely fits that of

Vauxhall Gardens, the famous amusement place of Dickens's boyhood."

Back parlour theatricals were the great joy of young Charles; acting, stage-managing and, it is quite likely, adapting the dialogue of dramatists to the requirements of the room where acted and to the abilities of members of the Dickens's family who took part in these amateur performances. Charles, we know, added phrases of his own to help the occasion, thus making himself remotely a co-author. Very possibly he wrote the Introductory Prologue to the Private Theatricals of which there is a printed bill dated April 27th, 1833. Not only is he down as Stage Manager but as playing in all three pieces given; the opera of *Clari* (containing the ballad of " Home, Sweet Home "), an interlude *The Married Bachelor*, and the then popular farce of *Amateurs and Actors*.

For another session of Private Theatricals about this time Dickens supplied *The O'Thello*, a travestie of Shakespeare's tragedy. He found fun in transforming the Moor into an Irishman. Changing the nationality of the principal character was a common trick with authors of burlesque and he followed the mode. Some of the manuscript pages of *The O'Thello* are extant: the bulk are missing. Those missing were sold severally when Dickens was a celebrity by his feckless father John. Should the elder Dickens need a few pounds, shillings or pence, and that was very often, he would tear off a page, cashing it in the manner of a cheque to the highest bidder. Charles, himself, had no wish for his burlesque to remain in existence. He dismissed it, with his early writings, as rubbish.

The first published Sketch by Boz, the *nom de plume* used by Dickens for his early stories, was *A Dinner at Poplar Walk* (afterwards called *Mr. Minns and his Cousin*) published in the *Monthly Magazine* for December, 1833. More Sketches were to appear in the magazine; others came out in the *Morning Chronicle*, *Bell's Life* and elsewhere. A number of them were to be adapted for the stage by various playwrights. There was one that Dickens dramatised himself *The Great Winglebury Duel* an item added to the Collection published in book form as *Sketches by Boz*, in February, 1836. The story reached the stage as " The Strange Gentleman " and was in the opening bill on September 29th, 1836, of the second season at the St. James's Theatre which John Braham, the fashionable singer, had built the previous year. The playhouse still proudly stands in King Street.

Boz shaped his story into the regulation farce of the day. There was bustling action but the humour, compared with the original Sketch, was commonplace. Yet the piece achieved a certain success being performed over sixty times that season and revived during the next. The characters in his two-act farce all forgather in the St. James's Arms on the road to Gretna Green. It is here that the Strange Gentleman arrives anxious to avoid fighting a duel. He tries to save his honour and his skin by planning his own arrest. To effect this the duel-dodger sends an anonymous letter to Mr. Owen Overton, the Mayor, denouncing himself as a lawbreaker. Matters become very confused in consequence and

various characters are mistaken one for the other. In the end the Strange Gentleman finds that his challenger has taken the opportunity to reach Gretna Green with the lady he, himself, had intended to wed. Indeed, the challenge received was a plot to bring about the event. But there is a consolation prize waiting for him in Julia Dobbs, a widow with £3,000 a year, one who is in search of a husband. He takes her instead to Gretna Green. John Pritt Harley, a mercurial comedian with whom Dickens soon struck up a friendship, played the Strange Gentleman. Madame Sala (mother of G. A. Sala the journalist) was Julia Dobbs and in the smallish part of John Johnson appeared Alfred Wigan, acting in his youth under the name of Mr. Sidney. Tom Sparks, Boots at the Inn and an incipient Sam Weller, was taken by rotund little John Gardner. According to Theodore Taylor there was an occasion during the run of the farce when Dickens went on for a part, presumably as one of the three Waiters.

The Strange Gentleman visited New York and was seen on September 15th, 1837, at the Park Theatre, where W. H. Chippendale played the title rôle and Charlotte Cushman, not yet the famous actress, was Mary Wilson. In Philadelphia the farce was staged at the Chestnut Street Theatre on January 29th, 1838, with W. E. Burton as the Gentleman. That the Dickens bantling found favour in America is proved by its revival at the Olympic, New York, on December 16th, 1839. This was a popular playhouse managed by the enterprising and inventive comedian W. H. Mitchell from Newcastle, England. He gave a cheeky performance of Tom Sparks while allocating the Harley part to James Browne, a minor member of his company. When Dickens came to New York five years later, what might be termed the freedom of the Green Room was pressed upon the ever stage struck young author and here he delighted in talking shop with Mitchell. It was Mitchell who furnished him with his Mr. Snobbington wig for the Montreal theatricals in which a few months later Charles was to revel.

Spanning the years, mention should be made of *The Strange Gentleman* revival in London at the Charing Cross Theatre on October 27th, 1873, when Arthur Wood enacted the title rôle. Paying deference to the wishes of the novelist's family, it was withdrawn shortly afterwards. Dickens before he died had expressed the desire that his early works for the stage should be buried in oblivion. But interest still persists; witness a recent performance of *The Strange Gentleman* arranged by the Borough of St. Pancras on October 10th, 1952.

There is but one scant reference to the actual name of the Strange Gentleman in the farce. He is Walker Trott so changed from Alexander Trott in *The Great Winglebury Duel* where his identity is never hidden. And he was Alexander in *Trott's Troubles*, a play adapted by Fred Fulton which was published in New York in 1878 and has been without a recorded professional production ever since.

Another of the Sketches that Boz is said to have prepared for the stage in his young and enthusiastic days is *The Bloomsbury Christening* printed in the *Monthly Magazine* for April, 1834.

The Strange Gentleman

The Village Coquettes

The appearance of J. B. Buckstone's farce *The Christening* at the Adelphi, on October 13th following, evidently discouraged him.[1] Writing to the editor of the magazine he claimed that Buckstone had made use of his published Sketch. Dickens, however, wrote in a more or less humorous vein, obviously intending his plea was not to be taken too seriously. The one similarity between the Sketch and the Farce is that both are concerned with a Christening Party to which an old bachelor is invited. In the former he is called Nicodemus Dumps and in the latter his name is Grum. Not a sentence of Boz's dialogue was used by Buckstone whose plot, one of absurd farcial misunderstandings, was utterly different from that of the Sketch. Boz had one baby; Buckstone had two and these two were of different parentage. In the manufactured nonsense of the farce the question of Fatherhood motivated the action. Reading the two works side by side it is difficult to accept *The Christening* of Buckstone as an adaptation of *The Bloomsbury Christening*. The subject alone is common to both.

Before dealing with later works of Dickens directly intended for the theatre, adaptations made by others of the Boz Sketches might be considered. The greater number of these Sketches are descriptive of customs, scenes and daily events. They contain insufficient material for drama. Certain of the articles that had semblance of a story emerged as plays somewhere. *Horatio Sparkins*, printed in the *Monthly Magazine* for February, 1834, was dramatised by Edward Stirling and produced at the Olympic, London, March 6th, 1840. It is the tale of a Byronic young man whose acquaintance is cultivated by Mr. and Mrs. Malderton because they think he will make a wealthy match for their daughter Teresa. Entering a cheap linen-draper's shop, Teresa and her mother, to their horror and disgust, discover the Mr. Smith serving behind the counter to be none other than the romantic Horatio. Stirling elaborated this trifle into a two-act farce of the same title. Benjamin Wench, a veteran comedian making one of his last appearances, played the pretentious Sparkins. The Maldertons had their name changed to Podge and the grocer brother Jacob

[1] See *The Dickensian*, 1934, XXX, 223.

Is She His Wife

The Lamplighter

Barton became Toby Trott (echoing "*The Strange Gentleman*") and was written up, over-written it should be said, to provide George Wild, an animated farceur, with a vehicle for clowning.

The Boarding House, the first episode of which appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* for May, 1834, was made into *Poodles; or Clandestine Matches*, anonymously converted and printed as a farcical comedy in three acts. *The Tuggs's at Ramsgate* born in the Library of Fiction, March 31st, 1836, was published in 1852 as a verse comedy with music. No name was set down for the adapter or the composer. The slight stage material in *Sentiment*, a story written by Dickens for the Second Volume of *Sketches by Boz*, was used by Miss Jolly for a play acted round and about London in April, 1934. *Mr. Watkins Tootle*, strangely enough, does not seem to have been dramatised although there is matter in the Sketch for farce or comedy.

An Entertainment with the embracing title of "Sketches by Boz" was given at the Crystal Palace on September 29th, 1879, by Walter Mason. None of the actual Boz Sketches were included. The performance consisted of short scenes from *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Dombey and Son*, *Little Dorrit*, *The Pickwick Papers* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the scenes being varied nightly. Supporting Mason in his venture were Rowley Buckstone (son of J. B. Buckstone), Henry Leigh, Ernest Hendrie and Mrs. Chippendale.

To come back to the first hand approach of Dickens to the theatre, *The Strange Gentleman* at the St. James's was succeeded at that house by another work of his on December 6th, 1836, *The Village Coquettes*. Nothing could have been more conventional than this operatic burletta as it was labelled. Text and lyrics of the two acts were by Boz, the melodies by John Hullah. The plot tells how the wicked Squire Norton, aided and abetted by his friend Flam, attempts the virtue of Farmer Benson's daughter, Lucy. He has no success and, before the opera is done, he becomes repentant, making ample amends all round for the concern he has caused. Manager Braham with his top tenor voice was heard in the rôle of the Squire while the element of true love was in the hands of Miss Rainforth as Lucy and George Bennett as her

swain George Edmunds. An eccentric chatterbox, Martin Stokes, fell to Harley who had an unbounding belief in the piece. Dickens afterwards wrote of *The Village Coquettes*:

"I just put down for everybody what everybody at the St. James's Theatre wanted to say and do, and that they could say and do best, and I have been most sincerely repentant ever since."

The music was liked and the songs encored, but the opera could hardly be termed a success achieving only nineteen performances. There is no record of a production in America though it might have been staged somewhere as a literary and musical curiosity, as was the case in London where it was revived at the People's Theatre, St. Pancras, June 30th, 1937.

A third play by Boz *Is She his Wife; or, Something Singular* came to the St. James's on March 6th, 1837. The subject was wholly one of matrimonial squabbles. Alfred Lovetown and his newly-wedded wife are becoming intensely bored with one another and each determines to make the other jealous. Mrs. Lovetown allows Felix Tapkins to overhear a pretended confession of her love for him. Mr. Lovetown, for his part, pays undue attention to Mrs. Limbury whose husband Peter adds one more to the number of jealous individuals. Lengthy explanations put everything right in the end. Harley, kindred soul of Boz, played Tomkins and Miss Allison (the Egeria to be of Charles Reade) was Mrs. Lovetown. The farce hopped in and out of the bill at the St. James's until the theatre closed for the summer.

Not counting any share Dickens may or may not have had in the dramatisation of *Oliver Twist* on March 27th, 1838, *Is She his Wife?* was the last play he gave to the St. James's although, from an undated letter to Harley, he had yet another in mind. He wrote:

"I have considered the terms on which I could afford just now to sell Mr. Braham the acting copywright in London of an entirely new piece for the St. James's Theatre; and I could not sit down to write one in a single act of about one hour long, under a hundred pounds. For a new piece in two acts, a hundred and fifty pounds would be the sum I should require. I do not know whether, with reference to the arrangements that were made with any other writers, this may or may not appear a large item. I state it merely with regard to the value of my own time and writings at this moment; and in so doing I assure you I place the remuneration below the mark rather than above it."

Presumably the terms were too high for Braham. The next play of Dickens, *The Lamplighter*, went to William Macready at Covent Garden in 1838. Three entries in the actor's diary of that year tell of its fate:

"Dec. 5th—Dickens brought me his farce, which he read to me. The dialogue is very good, full of point, but I am not sure about the meagreness of the plot. He reads as well as an experienced actor would—he is a surprising man.

"Dec. 11th—Dickens came with Forster and read his farce. There was manifest disappointment; it went flatly, a few ready

laughs, but generally an even smile, broken in upon by the horse-laugh of Forster, the most indiscreet friend that ever allied himself to any person. He has goaded Dickens to write this farce, and now (without testing its chances of success) would drive it upon the stage. Defend me from my friends! It was agreed that it should be put into rehearsal, and, when nearly ready, should be seen and judged of by Dickens! I cannot sufficiently condemn the officious folly of this marplot, Forster, who embroils his friends in difficulties and distress in this most determined manner. It is quite too bad.

" Dec. 12th—A long discussion on Dickens's farce; called in for their opinion Messrs. Bartley and Harley. The result was that Forster decided on withdrawing the farce."

The chief character in *The Lamplighter* is Mr. Stargazer, a ridiculous old astronomer who, believing in astral signs, pounces upon Tom Grig, a lamplighter, as the destined husband of his niece, Fanny Brown. Grig is taken into the astronomer's house where, along with freak specimens in alcohol, he encounters Galileo, the retarded son of Stargazer, and Mr. Mooney, an astrologer vacant of mind and absurd in manner. The straggled action ends with Grig pairing off with the maid, Betsy Martin, and Galileo with his cousin Fanny. There was no production of the farce and three years later, Boz, reversing the process of *The Strange Gentleman* turned what was intended for the stage into reading matter. The reversal appeared in 1841 as *The Lamplighter's Story*, embodied in a narrative included in the collection of contributions by " various hands," edited by Dickens and known as *The Pic-Nic Papers*.

The rich rewards that attended Dickens as a novelist steered his pen away from playwriting. After *The Lamplighter* he was never to work alone on a stage work of any kind. Yet his thoughts and interests never wandered from the theatre. For Westland Marston's tragedy, *The Patrician's Daughter*, at Drury Lane on December 10th, 1842, he provided a Prologue of forty-eight lines spoken by the eminent Macready.

With Bulwer Lytton and others, Dickens formed the Guild of Literature and Art, taking under his wing the theatrical performances connected with it. For the initial venture which was given at Devonshire House in Piccadilly on May 16th, 1851, Lytton wrote a five-act comedy, *Not so Bad as we Seem*, and Mark Lemon in collaboration with Dickens furnished a farce, *Mr. Nightingale's Diary*, as an afterpiece. It was mainly an affair of comedians. Both the authors took part in it, being, as it were, let loose upon their own dialogue. Improvisations and last-moment additions at each performance swelled the original script. The plot allowed the two author-comedians to impersonate a wealth of characters. As Mr. Gabblewig of the Middle Temple, Dickens, in protean fashion, masqueraded in turn as Charley Bits (a Boots in the mould of Sam Weller), Mr. Poulter (a Pedestrian and Cold Water Drinker), Captain Blower (an Invalid), a Respectable Female (a Mrs. Gamp-like person), and a Deaf Sexton. As Slap, a country actor, Mark Lemon, in similar style, made appearances in various assumed rôles. It was all good fun, particularly, we

may be sure, to Dickens. He loved to gag and gag he did to his heart's content in this elastic farce.

Mr. Nightingale's Diary was given in the amateur theatricals at Tavistock House on June 19th, 1855, together with *The Lighthouse* by Wilkie Collins, a play dramatised by him from one of his own stories in *Household Words*. Dickens, the producer, spoke a Prologue written by himself and in addition contributed the lyric of " The Song of the Wreck " as well as acting Aaron Gournock in the drama. He supplied a Prologue to another play of Collins at Tavistock House. This was *The Frozen Deep* on January 6th, 1857. Dickens played Richard Wardour and, as before, had a certain share in the play's composition. *The Lighthouse* and *The Frozen Deep* were to be staged professionally, both at the Olympic Theatre at later dates. It was the intention of Dickens to write an original farce for the Guild theatricals. In a letter to Frank Stone, one of the famous amateurs participating, he gave some indication of the plot and the part he wanted Stone to create. But the farce was never penned. Other plays in his mind were versions of *A Message from the Sea* and *Great Expectations*, if for reasons of copyright alone.

When actor-manager Charles Fechter held the lease of the Lyceum Theatre from 1863 to 1867, Dickens, intensely interested in the enterprise, constituted himself something of a play doctor to the establishment. He did an amount of rewriting on *The Mountebank*, made changes in Dion Boucicault's *The Long Strike* and assisted Mrs. Bellew in *The King's Butterfly* (from *Fan Fan la Tulippe* of Paul Meurice). His suggestions and work on *The Master of Ravenswood*, taken from Scott's novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, made him virtually the collaborator of J. Palgrave Simpson whose name was down as adapter. The last association of Dickens with the stage was *No Thoroughfare* at the Adelphi whither Fechter had gone after leaving the Lyceum. The history of the play of which he and Wilkie Collins were joint authors has been dealt with in *The Dickensian*, 1954, p. 37.

The illustrations reproduced from Dicks' Penny Plays.

A play for Christmas *Why the Angels Sang*, by Jonathan Field, was presented by Bernard Miles at the church of St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street, for eight performances beginning on December 28th. Among the characters, appearing to a vicar and a group of church workers engaged in a discussion on the meaning of Christmas, is Charles Dickens, a part played, on this occasion, by Derek Prentice.

* * * * *

Television For the edition of the popular Television " Quiz," " Animal, Mineral or Vegetable," broadcast on January 29th, the objects were chosen chiefly from museums. From the Dickens House came the china monkey which used to stand on Dickens's desk as he wrote, and which is seen in Luke Fildes's picture " The Empty Chair." Of the two teams, experts and amateurs, empanelled that night, only one member, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, identified the figure.

DICKENS REJECTS

By Gerald G. Grubb
(Wake Forest College, N.C.)

BEFORE Dickens had finished with *Bentley's Miscellany*, he had worked out some very definite editorial standards, and methods. By the time he had devoted eighty-eight weeks to *Master Humphrey's Clock*, and had serialised two fairly long novels through its weekly issues, he had developed the basic elements of his pattern of weekly serialisation. He entered upon the editorship of the weekly *Household Words* as a master who had already risen above all amateurish fumbling for standards and methods. I have shown elsewhere how Dickens would reject *any* manuscript on its lack of serial qualities or lack of merit.[1] No amount or degree of influence could break his will on those points.

Through the years prior to 1850 and the establishment of *Household Words*, Dickens had made some close friends and some powerful ones; and it was quite natural that many of them should bring to his attention manuscripts written by themselves, by members of their families, and by their friends. Sometimes such offerings possessed merit enough to warrant Dickens's retaining them or suggesting other outlets for them; but, generally speaking, they were practically worthless. Examples of this procedure among his well-meaning friends whose excellencies consisted of some other virtue than that of the literary critic present themselves again and again in his correspondence. These offerings by proxies always weighed heavily upon Dickens's conscience, patience, and time; for he almost never wrote cold rejection slips; but he tried to be firm, clear, constructive, and encouraging where he saw any hope at all for the ultimate success of the writer; and, above all, he endeavoured to retain the friendship and the goodwill of the persons involved.

One of the earliest instances of a powerful friend's bringing his influence to bear upon Dickens as an editor has just come to my attention through an examination of an unpublished letter now in the Whitaker Collection in the Library of The University of North Carolina. George Nugent Grenville, Baron Nugent of Carlanstown, County Westmeath (1777-1850), liberal Member of Parliament sitting for Aylesbury, the recipient of Dickens's letter, was one whom the latter delighted to honor. While listing the important friends of Dickens and the great entertainments held at Devonshire Terrace between 1848 and 1851, Forster says, "Incomplete indeed would be the list if I did not add to it the frank and hearty Lord Nugent, who had so much of his grandfather, Goldsmith's friend, in his lettered tastes and jovial enjoyments."[2] Lord Nugent also entertained Dickens in his own Aylesbury house.[3] Some estimate of Dickens's regard for Lord Nugent may be made from his tribute to the nobleman's character

[1] "Dickens's Pattern of Weekly Serialisation," ELH, *A Journal of English Literary History*, IX (June, 1942), 141-156 "Dickens's Editorial Methods," *Studies in Philology*, XL (January, 1934), 79-100.

[2] *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Ley edn., p. 529.

[3] *The Nonesuch Letters*, II (May 24th, 1849), 155.

in a letter to Henry Watson on one occasion when it became necessary, because of business which could not be postponed, to decline an invitation to a public dinner honoring the Baron. Dickens wrote, "Few public occasions could I assure you, be more truly interesting to me than one which at once recognises Lord Nugent's worth and his devotion to those liberal and enlightened principles of which he was ever the able and consistent champion."[1]

Yet, Lord Nugent's influence was not enough to open the pages of *Household Words* to a manuscript which Dickens found lacking in quality. Also, this letter to Nugent is an excellent example of the way in which Dickens could firmly rebuff one with his left hand, so to speak; and, at the same time, with his right hand just as firmly bind that one to himself in the bonds of enduring friendship. The text of this letter follows:

OFFICE OF "HOUSEHOLD WORDS."
Twenty Fourth October 1850

My Dear Lord Nugent.

I should have written to you sooner, but for having been so closely occupied with Copperfield as to have had no leisure for any kind of correspondence.

Coming to town to-day, I have read Humpty Dumpty. I am extremely sorry to say that I do not think it at all suitable to Household Words. If I had the least doubt on the subject, I need not assure you (I hope), that I should have instantly given the full benefit of it to any friend of yours—to a lady most of all. But I am quite sure it would not do. It wants more of the breath of life, and is altogether wide of our mark.

I send it to you, inclosed, begging you to thank the fair authoress on my behalf, and to assure her of my respectful consideration.

My movements for the next week or so are not quite certain, but I think I am pretty sure to be in town next Saturday and Sunday—I mean this very next Saturday and Sunday week. Shall you be away in foreign parts before then—or will you engage to dine with us in Devonshire Terrace *en famille*—and not to come by mistake after supper?

Believe me always
Very faithfully yours
CHARLES DICKENS[2]

The Lord Nugent.

[1] *The Nonsuch Letters*, II (August 15th, 1847), 50.
[2] I am indebted to Mr. William A. Whitaker of New York City, the authorities of the Library of The University of North Carolina, and Mr. Henry Charles Dickens, O.B.E., legal head of the Dickens family, for permission to publish this letter.

THE VILLAGE COQUETTES

A comic opera by Charles Dickens, 1836
Music by John Hullah

Three evening performances: May 29th and 31st, June 2nd, by the Music Group of the London C.H.A. Club, Fred Tallant Hall, 141 Drummond St., London, N.W.1. One minute from Warren St., Underground Station.

Tickets 3/6 reserved, 2/6 unreserved from the Hon. Sec. at the above address, enclosing remittance and s/a envelope.

FOR THE DICKENSIAN'S BOOKSHELF

A CENTURY OF DICKENS CRITICISM

By JOHN BUTT

Mr. Ford's admirable book[1] is the victim of the irritating delays which have been the plague of publishing since the war. Although his preface is dated March 1953, the book was not published in this country until December 1955. This must be said at the outset to explain what might otherwise seem inexplicable, a failure to take account of Mr. K. J. Fielding's pamphlet, *Charles Dickens*, in the British Council's series "Writers and their Work," and Mrs. Tillotson's *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*, the first published in 1953, the second in 1954, and both covering some of the ground of Mr. Ford's book. It seems unlikely that he would not have modified his estimate of Forster as a biographer in the light of Mr. Fielding's judicious treatment, or have profited by the wealth of detail provided in Mrs. Tillotson's introductory chapter on the contemporary criticism of the novel.

Mr. Ford's business is to follow Dickens's reputation from *Pickwick Papers* to the present day. In the early chapters he accustoms us not merely to see Dickens through the eyes of his contemporaries, but to watch the effect of their response on Dickens himself. Thus he shows us what was traditional in *Pickwick Papers*, what was familiar to the readers of 1837, but also what was new and captivating—its earnestness, its recognition (in Hood's phrase) of the "soul of goodness in things evil—the goodness of Pickwickedness," its tendency "to make us practically benevolent," as the *Edinburgh Review* put it. And in the succeeding pages he carefully discriminates between Dickens's response to his readers' wishes in his early novels and his independence of convention. One of the merits of Mr. Ford's survey, as of Mrs. Tillotson's, is that it replaces Dickens in the turmoil of mid-nineteenth century publishing. It makes us aware that his great reputation was never unchallenged, either by novelists like G. W. M. Reynolds, with a lurid, popular appeal, or by more sophisticated readers, whose notions of what a novel should be were shaped to a large extent by the great periodicals of the day.

This opens up questions of wider interest. As the years went by, the critics' conception of the novel altered, and of course Dickens's own conception of the novel altered too. Mr. Ford points to two articles of especial interest, which anticipate later developments in criticism, one by David Masson in the *North British Review* for May 1851 (later expanded in his *British Novelists and their Styles*, 1859), the other by a writer in the *Prospective Review* (1851). Each critic, at a time when novel criticism was limited by moral considerations and by the demands of realism, showed himself capable of a wider view: Masson was perhaps the first to point out that Dickens had an "especially susceptible and poetic nature" and that his characters are not so much realistic

[1] *Dickens and his Readers: Aspects of Novel-Criticism since 1836*. By George H. Ford. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, for the University of Cincinnati London, Cumberlege, 48s.

as "transcendental renderings of certain hints furnished by nature"; the *Prospective Review* manifested an unusual interest in the art of narrative, the autobiographical novel as a form, and problems of "point of view."

Novel criticism has of course been affected in time by the work of later novelists, French and Russian, as well as American and British; and as critics have laboured to take account of their work, so the critical assessment of Dickens has changed. Space does not permit us to pursue Mr. Ford's record of the result of these changes in the fluctuation in Dickens's reputation, but a passage from his concluding section, "The Uncommon Reader," may serve to suggest the directions he has discovered:

> In the midst of this reassessment, critics have been fond of drawing parallels between Dickens and Joyce, or Lawrence, or Dostoevsky, or Kafka. We may sometimes want to protest that Dickens is more like Dickens than he was like any other writer. His note is surely distinctive enough. Yet the urge to draw these comparisons is understandable. It is a protest against the kind of reader who still wishes to confine him to the level of a childhood classic. Moreover, the four novelists cited are appropriately chosen not because each has been the idol of various cults in England during recent decades, but because all four have a similar attitude towards the possible range of prose fiction.
>
> Joyce seems the least promising for comparison . . . Yet *Ulysses*, with its elaborate blending of symbolistic and realistic narrative, its emphasis upon the myths of basic human experience, did more towards preparing for the reinterpretation of Dickens than did Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale* or J. B. Priestley's *The Good Companions*. I mean that such novelists as Joyce and Lawrence anticipated the counter-revolution in criticism which we have been tracing, and that criticism, in devising ways of coping with their narratives, had been aided in coping with those of Dickens.

In short, the more we study Dickens's novels by the light which later novelists provide, the more we discover that his work "can thrive upon analysis, and that his vitality is not a kind of fake vitality."

As a postscript, it may be noted that the Fellowship also has its place in Mr. Ford's pages. Perhaps we ought to take this opportunity of seeing ourselves as others see us:

> Although the interests and backgrounds of its thousands of members are, in reality, widely varied, the tone of the Dickens Fellowship has been commonly identified by its critics with a single kind of reader who is represented as a harmless old duffer at best and an ignorant zealot at worst. If Sir Max Beerbohm had followed up his celebrated picture of Browning drinking tea in the company of members of the Browning Society by drawing a comparable scene of the organised Dickensians, he might have gone back to Phiz's illustrations from *Pickwick Papers* for models. The Transactions of the Pickwick Club seem indeed to repeat themselves in the transactions of

provincial branches of the Dickens Fellowship. Instead of "Speculations on the source of Hampstead Ponds, with some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats," there are apt to be speculations about which room of the White Hart Inn was occupied by Samuel Weller.

THE WISDOM OF HUMPHRY HOUSE

By Pansy Pakenham

All lovers of English literature and Dickensians in particular will find this collection of broadcasts and reviews[1] of absorbing interest; learned without heaviness and amusing without facetiousness. Though only one of the five parts is exclusively concerned with Dickens, many of the others deal with his contemporaries and with the hopes and ideas of his age. Indeed, Humphry House's wide knowledge of the nineteenth century gave him an advantage over many Dickensian specialists who have been unable to relate their subject to the world wherein he moved or to the literary, political and social causes with which he was concerned. Humphry House had already shown his familiarity with this background in *The Dickens World*, and in the present collection there are illuminating articles on Tennyson, George Eliot, Thackeray, the Pre-Raphaelites, as well as more general discussions on the Mood of Doubt, Man and Nature, and the Spirit of the Age.

Of the strictly Dickensian articles the longest and most interesting is his review[2] of an Introduction by Bernard Shaw to *Great Expectations*. He begins by saluting with respect Shaw's provocative opinions but then proceeds to examine them in detail and to point out their weaknesses and inaccuracies. Shaw always argued as if it was only Dickens's ignorance and worldliness that prevented him from being a Shavian, and tried to fit *Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations* into a revolutionary Socialist framework. Humphry House shows that Pip's progress in gentility was not intended as a complete failure and that his final success as a partner in Herbert's business was planned by Dickens from the beginning. Nor was Magwitch the noble figure proclaimed by Shaw, and Pip's horror of him base ingratitude. Humphry House points out how much there is in common between Miss Havisham's schemes for Estella and Magwitch's for Pip. They both exploit a child to gratify their thwarted ambition and their desire for revenge on society. Dickens was never on the side of rebels and revolutionaries though this does not mean that he withheld sympathy from them, or was simply a sentimental anarchist. He strongly supported various social reforms entailing centralisation, if they promoted efficiency without loss of humanity, but he had no systematic political philosophy and judged each question as it arose. In fact, Dickens was essentially a man of action, an administrator, thinking in terms of living problems and people while Shaw's thoughts and words were concerned with shaping the future.

[1] *All in Due Time*, by Humphry House. Rupert Hart-Davis, 15s.
[2] First published in *The Dickensian* in 1948.

But a political empiricist is not necessarily ignorant and barbarous, and when Shaw asserts (and here Humphry House seems to agree with him) that Dickens did not take his art seriously, I can only express my dissent. The cruel portraits of Henry Gowan and Skimpole which, according to Shaw, are evidence of Dickens's hatred of artists, show rather the professional artist's hatred of amateurs and dilettantes, who bring their craft into disrepute. As for his Philistine taste in the visual arts of which Shaw complains, that is largely a matter of fashion, and I suggest that Gads Hill Place, within and without, would be found more aesthetically pleasing to modern eyes than " Shaw's Corner."

Another Dickensian essay is an Introduction to *Oliver Twist*, which gives a brief but comprehensive description of the political events and psychological emotions which inspired it, and shows how the Parish Boy's Progress gradually got forgotten among the guilty terrors and hatreds of outlaws and their victims. In *The Macabre Dickens*, Humphry House discusses more fully why this aspect of the novels, dismissed as cheap melodrama by earlier critics, should seem so significant to the present generation. He ascribes the change in taste partly to the new insight into human depravity gained in total war and partly to Freudian explorations of the sub-conscious. We are all aware nowadays of the murderer and madman within us. Flaubert confessed, " I am Madame Bovary ! " and Dickens could have echoed, " I am Bill Sikes," or Bradley Headstone or Jonas Chuzzlewit. He could as truly have said, " I am Little Nell," or Little Dorrit, and the one projection is no more evidence that he was brutal and violent in daily life than the other is that he was a saint. He sublimated both tendencies in his books and his acting, and generally presented a cheerful, well-balanced façade to his friends and family. The strain of keeping to this middle way became heavier as he grew older and his responsibilities multiplied. His separation from his wife can be explained as an effort to relieve it, and his death may have been due as much to mental as to physical exhaustion.

These are some of the reflections stimulated by Humphry House's article, which like all those included in this collection, errs only in being too short. One feels how much more he could have said on each subject and what interesting discussions could have developed from his ideas. His review of Edgar Johnson's biography of Dickens, and his description of the early stages of his editorship of the Dickens Letters show what a loss scholarship in general and Dickensian scholarship in particular have sustained by his premature death.

GRIMALDI

It is surprising that not until now has a biography[1] been written of the most celebrated of all English clowns, Joseph Grimaldi. His memoirs, edited by Dickens, are frankly disappointing. No one will deny that the work was an early pot-boiler of the novelist, and were it not for the fact that his name appears on the title page, and for the etchings of Cruikshank, it would be forgotten by now

[1] *Grimaldi*, by Richard Findlater, Macgibbon & Kee, 21*s*.

except among specialists in theatre history. But of course the biographer has special difficulties. Few things are more difficult to recreate in print than the art of actors of the past, and most of all the foolings of a clown, even an inspired one like Grimaldi. Mr. Richard Findlater, the well-known dramatic critic, has made as good an attempt as is possible. But if the effects created by the immortal Joey on the stages of Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Sadler's Wells, remain still a little dim to the reader, not so the capitally told story of his career against the fascinating theatre of his day. In this place, however, one error must be corrected. It has already led to a statement that Dickens was not responsible for the *Memoirs* at all. In his interesting appendix about Dickens's editing that work, Mr. Findlater credits Forster with the following: " Except the preface, he [Dickens] did not write a line of the biography, such modifications and additions as he made having been dictated to him by his father." A glance at Forster will reveal precisely the opposite to be the case, i.e. that the modifications or additions were dictated " by him to his father." L.C.S.

BERNARD DARWIN

Had this delightful autobiography[1] been written by anyone else than Mr. Bernard Darwin, and he himself had reviewed it, I would wager that he would have quoted Weller to the effect that, with regard to Dickens, he could " vish there wos more, and that's the great art of letter writin'," as of book writing. The reader of Dickens will take up the volume in eager anticipation, knowing of course that there will be much of golf in it, but also hoping that there will be much of the felicitous comment on his favourite author, of the kind in which he has revelled for years on the leader page of *The Times*. It is here, but only in one chapter, and no amount of fine writing on golf will console the Dickensian for the sad fact that there is no more. L.C.S.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

A history of English Literature in three volumes of three hundred pages apiece could be a dull business, in which compression was only too obvious, but, although Mr. Ward's excellent work rattles along at a fine pace, and makes absorbing reading, it can hardly be expected to be satisfying for the student of any one author. Dickens has perforce to be content with half a dozen pages, but he is presented against the background of the pageant of English Literature with skill, in this third volume of the work,[2] which ranges from Dr. Johnson to G.B.S. There has, of course, to be much generalisation, and the great world created by Dickens does not take too kindly to such treatment. Mr. Ward castigates him for his " jerry-built " plots. Others have found his powers of construction worthy of the highest praise. That point apart, Mr. Ward does as well as is possible in summing up, in a couple of pages, the reasons for Dickens's undisputed pre-eminence.

L.C.S.

[1] *The World that Fred Made*, by Bernard Darwin, Chatto & Windus, 21s.
[2] *Illustrated History of English Literature*, by A. C. Ward. Vol. III. Longmans Green, 25s.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Edwin Drood

SIR,

As Mr. Gavin Brend cites me as one of the " Undertakers " of Edwin Drood and declares that the burden of proof is on us, may I make a few comments on the nature of our evidence.

The " Undertakers " have four first-hand witnesses, *i.e.*, people who claimed to have been told of Drood's death by Dickens himself. Two of them, Forster and Collins, gave independent accounts before any public discussion had arisen. The " Resurrectionists " have no first-hand witnesses at all and have to rely on discrediting ours.

For instance, Mr. Brend admits that Collins's letter appears convincing, but then throws doubt on it by asking:

(a) Why Collins did not confide in his wife (later Mrs. Perugini);

(b) Why Dickens confided in Collins whom he disliked;

(c) Why Collins's letter was unsatisfactory for the would-be dramatist.

For (a) see Mrs. Perugini's article in the *Pall-Mall Magazine*, June 1906.

For (b) Dickens chose Collins as illustrator, which entailed certain revelations, nothing to do with his being a confidant, literary or personal. This also applies to Luke Fildes.

(c) The *Mystery of Edwin Drood* is not a riddle but a labyrinth, and a correct answer to the question of Edwin's death or survival is only a first step towards the centre. Dickens meant to keep his readers in suspense about the matter and it was not till Forster's *Life* had appeared that the " Resurrectionists' " theory seemed an original idea. I suggest that if Collins's letter had been published when it was written, they would never have come into existence.

PANSY PAKENHAM.

THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

Brief contributions are invited for this page. *Press cuttings not accepted.*

The Fellowship desires to convey its thanks to the retiring Secretary of the Oakland, Cal., Branch, Bro. Cyprian Bryant, who is succeeded by Bro. Joseph Fulton, O.P.

A cordial welcome to England is extended to Miss Forsyth and Miss Sissons of Melbourne, and to Mr. and Mrs. Hovey and daughter, of Boston.

OBITUARY

We regret to record the death, after a long illness, of Mrs. L. A. F. Tonkin, the widow of Mr. A. J. Tonkin, who, with the late J. W. T. Ley, founded the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society in April, 1902. Until her illness Mrs. Tonkin took an active part in the work of the Society, especially its charitable aspects.

We also regret to announce the death of Lady Agnes Durham, Miss B. Lambert, Mr. J. Laker, Mr. J. W. Starkey, and Miss E. M. Robinson, all of Headquarters, Mr. J. Hughes and Mr. S. F. Payne of Redditch, and Mrs. Gem of Manchester.

WALTER T. SPENCER

(M. E. SPENCER)

27 New Oxford Street,

ESTABLISHED 1884 **London, W.C.1**

Cable and Telegraphic Address: "PHIZ, WESTCENT, LONDON."
Telephone: HOLBORN 3936

First Editions of the Works of Charles Dickens, including Presentation Copies; also Manuscripts, Autograph Letters for Sale

The Dickens Fellowship

LONDON MEETINGS

Mar. Mon. 5th. Whist Drive at 13 Brondesbury Road, N.W.6 at 7 p.m. Tickets, 3s.

Wed. 21st. Lecture: "The England of Dickens—Poverty or Good Cheer." Mr. George Schwartz of *The Sunday Times*.

April Thurs. 19th. Annual General Meeting, followed by a paper by Capt. J. J. Daniel, and a debate between Mr. Vernon Fielder and Mr. Mostyn Harper.

Sat. 28th. Ramble: "Westminster," conducted by Mr. W. A. Macgregor. Meet St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, 2-30 p.m.

May Sat. 12th. Ramble: "Tower Hill to Quilp's Wharf," conducted by Mr. T. V. Brewer. Meet Tower Hill Station, 2-30 p.m.

All meetings, unless otherwise stated, at Swedenborg Hall, 20-22 Bloomsbury Way, W.C.1., at 7 p.m.

See p. 90 for a production of Dickens's *The Village Coquettes*.

THE DICKENS FELLOWSHIP

LIST OF BRANCHES WITH HON. SECRETARIES.

HEADQUARTERS: THE DICKENS HOUSE, 48 DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON, W.C.1.
HOL. 2127.

Hon. Secretary: JOHN GREAVES. Hon. Treasurer: E. J. MITCHELL, O.B.E.
Hon. Editor of *The Dickensian*: LESLIE C. STAPLES.

UNITED KINGDOM.

BATH (No. 81).—Miss G. M. ROLLING, 8 Southcot Place, Lyncombe Hill.

BIRMINGHAM (No. 19).—Miss K. VENABLES, 334 Boldmere Road, Erdington.

BLACKBURN (No. 107).—LEO. MASON, 124 Preston New Road.

BLACKPOOL Mrs. N. BRAMMER, 237 Waterloo Road.

BRISTOL AND CLIFTON DICKENS SOCIETY (No. 124).—ARTHUR GEORGE, "Cleveleigh," 27 Kellaway Avenue, Westbury Park, Bristol.

BROADSTAIRS (No. 130).—Miss G. WATERER, Dickens House, Broadstairs.

CHELTENHAM (No. 63).—Mrs. H. HAILING, Bradwell Lodge, Sandford Mill Road.

EASTBOURNE (No. 75).—A. MORTON WEBB, Dickens Hall, Upperton Road.

GLOUCESTER (No. 40).—Miss D. A. KENDALL PEARSON, 128 Wotton Hill.

HULL (No. 34).—Miss MARGARET CORDOCK, 59 Richmond Street, Hull.

LIVERPOOL (No. 5).—Mrs. B. OSMOND, 63 Heathfield Road.

LYTHAM ST. ANNES (No. 135)—Mr. LAMB, 18 East Cliff.

MANCHESTER (No. 4).—Miss A. M. POOL, 19 Sandflands Road, Manchester, 28.

NOTTINGHAM (No. 9).—Mrs. MARY GILES, The Rectory, Wollaton.

PLYMOUTH (No. 46).—Miss VERA COCKS, 31 Mt. Gold Road, Lipson.

PORTSMOUTH (No. 137)—Mrs. STOCK, 58 Francis Avenue, Southsea.

PRESTON (No. 123).—Mrs. A. SLEDDON, Ribble Bank, Salmesbury.

REDDITCH (No. 56).—Mrs. TREADGOLD, 33 Ipsley Street

ROCHESTER (No. 13).—H. GARNER, 20 York Road.

RUGBY (No. 111).—Miss E. D. HUDSON, "Elmhurst," Ashlawn Road.

ST. PANCRAS (No. 76).—Miss E. G. VAUTIER, 63 Farm Way, Worcester Park, Surrey.

SHEFFIELD (No. 23).—Mrs. J. MOXON, 50 Grove Avenue, Sheffield, 6.

SHREWSBURY (No. 14).—Mrs. H. M. CROCKITT, 24 Ashley Street.

SOUTHEND AND DISTRICT (No. 54).—HARRY TOYE, 26 Southbourne Grove, Westcliff.

TEWKESBURY (No. 74).—L. G. MARSTON, Rosemead, 34 Barton Road.

WOLVERHAMPTON (No. 136).—Mrs. G. CONWAY, 123 Trysall Road

AUSTRALIA.

ADELAIDE (No. 127).—Miss G. LAWSON, 11 Gore Street, St. Leonards.

BRISBANE (No. 83).—Mrs. M. L. YOUNG, Como, Ormiston, Queensland

MELBOURNE (No. 24).—Miss McMEEKIN, Box 1879—R, G.P.O.

SYDNEY (N.S.W.) (No. 64).—Mrs. L. BANNISTER, 1 The Strand, Rochdale.

NEW ZEALAND.

AUCKLAND (No. 99).—Miss B. WRIGHT, 11 Galatea Terrace, Herne Bay.

CHRISTCHURCH (No. 117).—Miss P. BRUNT, 18 Palmers Road, New Brighton.

DUNEDIN (No. 139)—F. G. C. HENWOOD, 2 Oba Street.

WELLINGTON (No.121).—Miss E. SMYTH, G.P.O. Box, 930

CANADA.

EDMONTON (Alberta) (No. 100).—Mrs. R. M. WARREN, 8304 110th Avenue.

MONTREAL (Que.) (No. 52).—Miss G. White, 34 Walkley Avenue.

TORONTO (Ont.) (No. 32).—Mrs. E. L. SCHAT 66 Lankin Blvd.

VANCOUVER (B.C.) (No. 84).—W. M. REED. 12 Pacific Street.

VICTORIA (B.C.) (No. 113).—Mrs. D. H. WHIT c/o Y.W.C.A.

WINNIPEG (Manitoba) (No. 25).—Mrs. P. S. MURPHY, 59 Monck Avenue, Norwood.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BLOOMINGTON (Indiana) (No. 140)—M. HISEY, 324 S. Highland.

BOSTON (Mass.) (No. 73).—Mrs. MARTHA RIPLEY, 141 Englewood Avenue, Brookline.

CALIFORNIA PICKWICK CLUB (No. 131).—M. EUNICE GRIFFITHS, 5418 7th Ave, Los Angel

CHESTER (Pa.) (No. 22).—Mrs. JOHN O'BRI 740 Irvington Road.

CHICAGO (Ill.) (No. 33).—Mrs DAMARIS BRADFORD, 6060 N. Paulina Street.

EAST BAY, BERKELEY (Cal.) (No. 95).—M. G. M. WILLIAMS, 1159 Glen Ave., Berkeley

EVERETT (Wash.) (No. 82).—Mrs. S. MILLER 4022 High Street.

HONOLULU (Hawaii) (No. 115).—Miss MARGAR C. NEWMAN, Library of Hawaii, Honolulu.

LOS ANGELES (Cal.) (No. 89).—Mrs. E. RICKARDS, 5256 North Corteen Place, Hollywood.

MADISON (Wis.) (No. 103).—Mrs. J. G. D. MA 1626 Madison Street.

MARINETTE (Wis.) 108).—Mrs. EARL HE 1863 Riverside Avenue.

MARYVILLE (Missouri) (No. 133).—Mrs. A. HARVEY, 722 North Fillmore St., Maryville, U.S.A.

NEW YORK CITY (N.Y.) (No. 29).—Mrs. VALENTINE, 160 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn

OAKLAND St, ALBERTS COLLEGE (No. 141 Rev. JOSEPH FULTON, O.P. St. Alberts Coll 6172 Chabot Road, Oakland 18, Calif.

PALOS VERDES (Cal.) (No. 129).—Mrs. Wa G. BIRD, 9 Sea Cove Drive, Portuguese B Calif.

PHILADELPHIA (Pa.) (No. 41).—Miss E. HUT 3507 Highland Avenue, Camden, N.J.

PITTSBURGH (Pa.) (No. 97).—Mrs. F. FAIRMAN, 1011 N. Negley Avenue, Apt. 12.

SEATTLE (Wash.) (No. 126).—Mrs. FLORA BELL, 16055 10th Avenue, S.W.

SIERRA MADRE (Cal.) (No. 60).—Mrs. T. 274 W. Montecito Avenue.

WORCESTER (Mass.) (No. 119).—Mrs. T. E Jnr., 66 Beaconsfield Road.

Full particulars of the Fellowship and Forms of Membership can be obtained from any of the Secretaries.